

# This Simple Visualization Exercise Reduces Stress in Just 5 Minutes

The following is excerpted from the article, “Psychologists discovered This Simple Visualization Exercise Kills Stress in Just 5 Minutes” by Jessica Stillman of Inc.com, April 28, 2025.



Photo: Getty Images

If there is one [finding in psychology research](#) you can be pretty sure of, it's that [spending time in nature](#) reduces stress. Study after study shows that [when humans get outside](#), both their perceived feelings of tension and biological markers of stress go down.

The problem is that the utility of this insight has been limited to times when you can physically leave your office. That is until [a recent study appeared in \*The Journal of Environmental Psychology\*](#). The research by a Finnish and Norwegian team found you can use nature to significantly reduce your stress no matter where you are. All you need is your brain and five quiet minutes.

## Feel stressed? Try imagining a forest.

Nordic people are known the world over for [their love of nature](#). But not everyone lives within easy access of a beautiful fjord or dense northern forest. And if you're lucky to have one

nearby, that doesn't mean you can pop over whenever you feel your nerves starting to fray at work.

Perhaps that's why this team of researchers was keen to investigate whether just imagining nature might have some of the same stress-killing effects as actually spending time outdoors.

Not only did the participants who pictured nature report feeling more relaxed, they also showed physical signs of lower stress, like a slower and more variable heart rate.

## **The most accessible way to lower stress**

There is no shortage of [good stress-busting tips](#) out there. Physical exercise and [being kind to others](#) have both been shown to reduce stress.

But this latest finding might be among the fastest and most accessible stress-busting tricks yet discovered. Literally all you need is your brain, five quiet minutes, and enough experience with nature to be able to imagine the outdoor scene of your choice.

The researchers acknowledge this advantage in their paper, writing: "The present results suggest that when access to nature is not possible, the incorporation of nature imagery instead of actual visits to nature may be a potentially valid alternative."

Waiting for a high stakes meeting and feeling your heart rate rise? Go for a mental walk down your favorite mountain trail. Just closed Zoom after a contentious conversation and feel angry? Close your eyes and picture [a pristine beach](#) instead.

This kind of [mental travel](#) might not sound like much. But the latest psychological science suggests something as simple as five minutes visualizing nature really can significantly lower your stress levels. Give it a try.