

The Beach House

A Sleepy Sensory Story by Jo Grace, on behalf of Simple Stuff Works



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A sleepy sensory  *brought to you by:*





Sensory stories

Sensory stories convey a narrative using a mixture of words and sensory experiences.

Sensory stimulation supports cognitive development, learning, memory and communication.

Narratives are an enriching part of life, we all enjoy stories, and within the story telling space we find ourselves better able to understand concepts and try new things.

Sensory stories can be used to support individuals with a range of needs and disabilities, they are particularly beneficial to individuals with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

You can download a free guide called **Sharing a sensory story** from:

<http://jo.element42.org/sensory-stories>

The best thing about sensory stories is that they are fun.

Postural care

Good postural care helps to prevent people who find it hard to move from developing damaging body shape distortions. With the right information and by using the right equipment and positioning techniques you can protect and restore a person's body shape. Body distortion does not have to be an inevitable consequence of disability.

Night time positioning is especially important as we spend so much time in bed over the course of our lives. Getting used to a new night time position can take time, practice and patience. Supporting someone to learn to lie comfortably on their back can be challenging but there are recognised benefits which will make your efforts all worthwhile.

Please remember to use a comprehensive safety checklist, if you have concerns for the person's safety while they lie on their back ensure that there is someone with them at all times. This story has been written to form part of a bed time routine however it can easily be used during the day to help the person practice a new position before this is introduced at night.



“Together we are better”

We (Sarah Clayton from Simple Stuff Works and Joanna Grace from The Sensory Story Project) have teamed up to bring you a sensory story designed to support the delivery of good postural care. We hope you will benefit from, and enjoy, sharing it. Everything you need to know to tell the story is in this booklet, combine this with your knowledge and the expert advice you have received from your therapist and you will be ready to go.

Introducing The Beach House

The Beach House is based upon a model of guided meditation intended to help the person being guided to reach a state of deep relaxation. By moving through doorways, gateways and down steps the subconscious mind is led to a relaxed state conducive with sleep.

The sensory stimuli accompanying this story have all been chosen to support the process of calming down, unwinding, relaxing and hopefully dropping off to sleep. When you deliver the story you can choose between focusing on the guided meditation aspect of the story or delivering it in the structured way advocated in the **Sharing a sensory story** guide. Do whatever is right for the person you are sharing the story with.

When sharing a sensory story in a structured way you are encouraged to keep retellings of the story as similar to each other as possible, the benefit of doing this is that it makes the story very predictable, minimising anxiety for those who find new things challenging, and developing a reassuring familiarity which people find soothing. If you choose to focus more on the guided meditation aspect of the story then you may want to suggest things for the person to imagine, e.g. by speculating on what flowers grow in the garden, or what sounds can be heard. It's unlikely that you'd say the same things each time here, but by suggesting ideas you can create a rich canvas of the imagination for the person you are guiding to step into and explore. There is no right or wrong way of doing things, simply choose what is best for you and your story experiencer.

The Beach House story leads you through a garden gate, into a blooming garden in the peak of summer; you tread the garden path to the front door of the house and go inside. Once inside you make your way along a cool hallway scented with flowers from the garden to a staircase. The staircase leads you down to where the back door of the house opens out onto



a private beach. You step outside and lie down on the white sand listening to the sound of the waves.

As you move through the story there are cues for you to move through your postural care routine. You will be adjusting your story experiencer's legs and feet as you walk through the garden, their torso and arms as you enter the House. Once inside the House the postural care prompts fall back to allow your story experiencer to focus on the relaxation element of the story. The final description of being entirely supported by sand, which moulds itself to the body, should mirror the feeling of being fully supported that your story experiencer has when correctly positioned. The story ends with the experiencer turning their face towards the sun and falling asleep, any head adjustments needed can be made here, and the final contact of touching their face is a lovely way to end your interaction on a tender note.

This story is to be used in conjunction with the postural advice you have received from your therapist. The story pages have prompts indicating the sensory stimuli to be used with each section of the story and making suggestions for text you might want to add to the guided meditation. Make your own notes to remind you of key points for postural care.

It is well worth remembering the recognised advantages of supporting people to learn to lie on their back and remember there is no rush. The advantages published in an article called 'The Biomechanics of Body Shape Distortion' include: the person's head can be supported centrally; their shoulder girdle can lie symmetrically in a level, neutral position; their arms and hands can be gently supported in a functional position; the weight of their spine is lowermost and on the supporting surface, the softer more delicate part of their chest is uppermost and can be protected; their pelvis can be gently brought into a level position; the gap and their waist, between pelvis and lower ribs, can be brought into a position to lie symmetrically; their hips can be supported and protected in secure abduction, with the legs slightly apart; gravity can be used to gently help the knees to straighten; and finally their feet can be supported in a secure neutral position. For a copy of the article please contact Sarah at Training@simplestuffworks.co.uk

You may be thinking that telling a story, doing postural support, and guiding a meditation is a lot to do all at once. Don't worry! The story is very gentle, everything will happen at a relaxed pace, you'll soon get the hang of it. Sensory stimulation is beneficial to cognitive development and the maintenance of cognitive abilities; it can also help develop communication skills. Good postural care is an essential part of a healthy life. Guided



meditation is a useful calming strategy which can help individuals to relax and de-stress. You will be getting all these things at once through using this sleepy sensory story, so it's worth the effort and it should be fun.

Resourcing the story

To tell this story you will need to gather a few simple sensory resources. If you can find a marvellous box to keep these resources in that will help to make the story more captivating for the person with whom you are sharing the story.

Be aware of any sensory preferences, needs or allergies the person you will be sharing the story with may have and feel free to substitute more suitable resources as required.

Resource shopping list:

Massage lotion:

You may be able to find a mud coloured massage lotion if you hunt around the shops, but using something like olive oil or baby lotion is fine, what you are looking to create is the feeling of mud oozing between the toes so anything slippery will do.

Essential oils:

Choose a floral scent. Camomile, Jasmine, Lavender, Rose or Vanilla are all said to have soporific properties. Place a few drops of the oil on a cotton pad and seal it into a plastic container. When you remove the lid of the container the air inside will be fragranced by the oil making the smell experience easier to facilitate.

Doorknob:

A large doorknob, possibly mounted on a piece of wood to make it easier to offer to your story experiencer. In the story the doorknob is described as being brass, rather than hunting around for an antique brass doorknob simply change the words in the story to suit the doorknob you can find. Ideally you want one that will enable your story experiencer to curl all of their fingers around it, so for someone with large hands you might be looking for a large round doorknob, yet for someone with little hands perhaps a thin door handle that they could grip would be better suited.



Summer garden sounds:

Entering 'Summer garden sounds' into Youtube will bring you a collection of results, some of them intended for use during meditation. Choose one that suits you.

Sea lapping the shore sounds:

These are also easy to resource from Youtube. If you are not able to play Youtube clips other sites like Soundcloud also have suitable recordings, or of course you can use a cassette tape or CD, many meditation compilations will have these sorts of sounds on them. For some story experiencers their imagination will be able to provide the sounds, and your guided description will be enough stimulation without additional sound, indeed for some people recorded sounds can be off putting as they do not match the imaginary world they are creating.

Optional:

A dimmer switch: Having a dimmer switch for the bedroom light will allow you to adjust the light in the room as the person enters the house in the story.

Once you have collected your resources keep them together and try to use the same stimulus each time you tell the story. This will help the story to become predictable and increase feelings of security and comfort.

Facilitating the guided meditation for The Beach House

To deliver a guided meditation you yourself need to be calm, and ideally you will be in a calm environment free from distractions. Try to make the sharing of The Beach House the final activity before sleep so that the state of relaxation reached through sharing the story is not then disrupted by other tasks.

With a typical story you would be looking to engage the person in the story, looking to make it exciting and interesting; captivating. With this story it is a little different: the story happens inside the mind of the person experiencing it, much like a dream, and your job is just to be a softly spoken guide. Read the words in black type in a calm voice, if you want to embellish the description suggestions have been made for how to do so in amber type. Take your time over the words; allow the imagined world time to form in the mind of your story



experiencer. Following the early sections of the story there are spoken instructions to your story experiencer to relax certain parts of their bodies, these are indicated in amber type and speech marks in the story. You will be using two tones of voice when delivering the story, one for telling the story: a steady guiding voice, and one for delivering the direct instructions: a whispered confidential tone.

As was said in the introduction to this story, you have a choice to make between sharing the story in a clear and consistent manner, saying the same things each time, or sharing the story in a more naturalistic way, being led by the responses your story experiencer gives, and taking time to indulge the description in the meditation to lead them further into their experience. This isn't an either/or choice, you can find a balance between the two approaches that suits you and your story experiencer, or you can opt for one or the other.

Facilitating the sensory stimuli for The Beach House

Get everything ready before you start. Set out the sensory resources and the postural support resources you will need somewhere where you will be able to reach them easily as you share the story. Prop up the story pages somewhere where you can see them as you move about.

You enter the garden, through the gate, bare foot. You scrunch your toes into the soft, warm earth.

Massage your story experiencer's feet. You can begin by squelching the massage lotion between their toes with your fingers. Use your thumbs to press into the arches of their feet with a firm stroking pressure. Cup their feet between your hands and apply a gentle squeeze starting at the ankle and moving down to the toes. End by individually running your forefinger and thumb in a pinch from the top of each of their toes to the tip. Allow them a wriggle if they need it. At the end of this section you are looking for them to have fully relaxed their ankles, feet and toes, and for their feet to be in the position recommended in their postural care guidance.

The garden is in full bloom, vines grow overhead, tree bows creak with the weight of ripe fruit, there are flowers everywhere...walk along the path towards the House, listen to the sounds of life around you: the birds singing, crickets buzzing, bees humming.



Simply press play on the sound recording you are using, and allow it to play for as long as you feel is appropriate. It may be that you choose not to have a recording, and allow the sounds to be purely in the imagination of your story experiencer, in which case remember to allow time for them to spend listening to these imaginary sounds. Pace the list of sounds they hear so that they have time to listen to each one before you mention the next (it's a good idea to do the same with the things they see early on in this section of the story).

Your story experiencer's walking along the path is your chance to correctly position their legs and hips according to your postural care guidance. You may choose to spend more time describing stepping along the path to accommodate for this positioning. At the end of this section you are looking for your story experiencer to be in position and relaxed from the hips down.

At the front door you straighten up, shrug your shoulders a few times loosening the muscles. You reach out and grasp the heavy brass doorknob. Turn it and let the door swing open.

Let your story experiencer grasp the door handle with each hand in turn. We don't usually open a door using first one hand and then the other, but doing this will allow them to tighten and then relax the muscles in their hands, arms and shoulders.

The straightening up, and shoulder shrugging are your time to position their torso correctly. The shoulder shrugs are also good for them to do as they will develop an awareness of any tension held in their shoulders, and also present an opportunity to relax that area of the body. It is easier to relax a muscle once you know where it is, and using it first is an easy way of locating it. Through the story so far your story experiencer has tensed and then relaxed their: toes, feet, ankles, legs, torso, fingers, arms and shoulders.

Inside the house the air is cool; your eyes adjust to the gentler light. This is the time to adjust the lighting in the room ready for sleep. You may want to keep a low light on so that you can see to check your story experiencer's final body position. **Scent from freshly picked flowers wafts down the hall to you and you move towards them.** Open the container with the floral scent inside and allow the fragrance to waft over your story experiencer. Having a



low level of a relaxing scent in a room can help people to sleep, so once you have facilitated this experience you may opt to leave the container open so that the scent stays in the room.

You come to a staircase: ten stairs of dark wood with little particles of sand glinting on each one.

Moving down the staircase is the part of the meditation which will guide your story experiencer's mind into a state ready for sleep. Control your breathing, so that it is a steady in through the nose and gentle out through the mouth. This will inspire your story experiencer to do the same. You can add verbal guidance to support this if you feel it is necessary, you can also make suggestions as to how the deepening state of relaxedness will feel, e.g. "your whole body feels heavy", "All your limbs feel relaxed," "you feel safe and happy." Take your time over this section. Once they are down the staircase allow a few breathing cycles before you move on to the next section. For someone experiencing the story in a purely sensory way the sound of your breathing and the lull of your words will be the experience for this section of the story, so it is still as valuable to do the steady breathing with someone who cannot join in with it as it is with someone who can understand and participate.

In front of you is an open door, beyond the door there lies a white sandy beach. Step out onto the sand...lie down...the sand moulds to the shape of your limbs and supports your whole body. You turn your face upwards towards the sun and close your eyes. The sun warms your skin. You drift off to sleep listening to the sound of the ocean kissing the shore.

The final stimulus is the sound of the waves lapping on shore, this is as simple to facilitate as pressing play on whatever device you are using. The mention of turning ones face to the sun is your opportunity to move your story experiencer's head into a more suitable position.

Similarly the mention of the sand moulding to the body is your chance to check their full body position and make sure they are supported everywhere. By this point in the meditation they should be in a fully relaxed state, these are your final words to them and your final touch, try to just slip away and leave them on the beach in the sunshine. (Don't



end, pause, and then say “Right! Night night then, sleep well, we’ve aunty Carol’s to look forward to in the morning” and so on.)



The Beach House.

You enter the garden, through the gate, bare foot. You scrunch your toes into the soft, warm earth. See the gate...your feet....the rich brown soil.

Have your feet massaged.

“Now relax your toes....your feet....your ankles.”

The garden is in full bloom, vines grow overhead, tree bows creak with the weight of ripe fruit, there are flowers everywhere...walk along the path towards the House, listen to the sounds of life around you: the birds singing, crickets buzzing, bees humming. If you are going to add to the meditation guidance for this section you may choose to do so within the text, e.g. by adding descriptions of the things listed.

Hear garden sounds.

“Now relax your knees....your thighs....let your legs go floppy.”

At the front door you straighten up, shrug your shoulders a few times loosening the muscles. See the wood of the door... the lines in it... the grain... the knots...fleck~~s~~ of paint from where it was once painted. You reach out and grasp the heavy brass doorknob. Turn it and let the door swing open.

Touch the doorknob.

“Now relax your chest....your shoulders....your neck.”

Inside the house the air is cool; your eyes adjust to the gentler light. Dim or turn off the light here. Scent from freshly picked flowers wafts down the hall to you and you move towards them. The floor is made of slate, it's cool against your feet, the flowers are standing in a crystal vase on a little table, you run your fingers along the wall as you move further into the house. Smell floral scent.



“Relax your whole body.”

You come to a staircase: ten stairs of dark wood with little particles of sand glinting on each one.

You breathe in deeply. Breathe in deeply through your nose.

Slowly letting the air out of your lungs you step onto the tenth step. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.

You breathe in again and step down onto the ninth step. Breathe in deeply through your nose.

Breathing out you step down onto the eighth step. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.

Breathe in and step onto the seventh step. Breathe in deeply through your nose.

Breathe out and step onto the sixth step. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.

In and onto the fifth step. Breathe in deeply through your nose.

Out and onto the fourth step. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.

Breathe in deeply through your nose. And down onto the third step.

Breathe out slowly through your mouth. And down onto the second step.

Breathe in deeply through your nose. The final step. Breathe out slowly through your mouth. Continue to breathe slowly in and out for a few more times before moving onto the next sentence.

In front of you is an open door, beyond the door there lies a white sandy beach. Step out onto the sand...lie down...the sand moulds to the shape of your limbs and supports your whole body. You turn your face upwards towards the sun and close your eyes. The sun warms your skin. You drift off to sleep listening to the sound of the ocean kissing the shore. You can add description throughout this paragraph to enrich the imaginative canvas, you can describe how heat radiates from the sand, or what the warm sand feels like between the toes, you can describe how you move to lie down, bending slowly, easing yourself back, and so on.



Hear the lapping of the ocean on the sea shore.