

# The Three 'R's in the Forest – Guided Imagery

**NOTE: See Tips for effective guided imagery, in Procedure.**

"I'd like you to imagine that you are a tree.

You are tall and majestic.

Your branches reach toward the sky. It's summer.

You hold out your leaves that soak up the rays of the sun. It's warm and the breeze playfully tickles your leaves, making your branches sway gently. Birds and squirrels flit about your branches, and you grow. You can feel the tips of your branches growing longer, and your trunk getting just a little bit wider.

You feel so strong!

Gradually the nights get longer and the days get shorter, and the air becomes cooler. You send out chemical signals, hormones, through your branches and leaves to get ready for winter. Sensing the cooler weather, you slow down making chlorophyll, the pigment that gives your leaves their green colour. Without this green your leaves no longer make food. And the other pigments or colours show through - yellow, or brown or tones of red and orange.

The tiny tubes that carry fluids to and from your leaves gradually close off. Right where your leaf stem meets the branch, little cells are there to scissor cut the leaf stem. This happens at every leaf stem. One leaf snaps off your branch. Then another... and another... until they are all piled around the base of your trunk. A cold gust of wind swoops them up into the air and they are flung all about you.

You are sealing yourself up for approaching winter. Your fallen leaves are now the duff of the forest floor. Soon they will start to decompose, fortifying the soil's richness.

Eventually they will be part of the topsoil of the forest soil, right around your roots.

Winter's first snowflake falls upon one of your branches. The ground starts to feel cold around your roots. Winter is here. You feel the soft, icy tingle of snow, gradually piling heavy on your limbs. The snow insulates your roots from the harsh, freezing winter cold. You remain dormant.

It's so very quiet and you sleep...sleep...sleep.

Suddenly you are awakened by the sensation of sunlight, longer days, and warmer air temperatures. You send chemical signals through your body. It's spring. Start growing. The temperature of the soil warms. Your roots sense this change. They start to forage for food and water. Very soon water and nutrients are flowing up through your trunk, through the tiny vessels just under your bark. Your buds bulge and burst open. Fresh young leaves unfurl. At first they are a soft green. They grow bigger and darker green. They are filled with chlorophyll and making food from the sunlight with water from your roots: Food for growth; Food for maintenance; Food for flowers and seeds.

You are active and feel alive again!

Eventually you have lived the summer-fall-winter-spring seasons for over 150 years. You are growing old and tired. Your roots weaken. They are no longer able to hold you steady in the soil. The wind catches you. It tugs at your branches. You are no longer able to stand up against the forces. Down you topple. A loud crash is heard in the forest.

You come to rest on the forest floor.

Insects and other small creatures crawl onto and under your bark. They nibble at you. Beetles bore their way through your trunk, allowing bacteria to gain entry to your



inner core. Mosses and fungi start to cover you. You feel yourself dissolving. Rain and melted snow soak into you, making you soft and soggy.

You find yourself coming apart – breaking and crumbling into smaller and smaller pieces. You are no longer a tree. You are millions and millions of tiny parts sinking deeper and deeper into the earth. You have become earth.

Suddenly from the earth rises up a new baby tree, a seedling. Up! Up! Up you go, sucked up through tiny tubes in a new baby tree. And there are still tiny pieces of your former tree-ness waiting in the soil, waiting to be put together into something new. You are always changing into new and different structures. You are hundreds of years old and are once again a fresh new life.

We have now come to the end of the guided imagery. Staying as you are, please take a few moments to re-imagine all the images you had from beginning to end. And when you are ready, gently open your eyes, if they are closed, and come up to sitting, if you are not already.

