

Visualization—your powerful tool for change



Visualization is the act of picturing something in your mind. It is using your imagination. Your brain is visualizing all the time. When you think consciously about someone, you visualize them. When you think about something fun you did last weekend, you are visualizing it. When you think about going to the store to get groceries, you visualize the store you are thinking about going to. Really, the process of thinking is visualization. Most of us “think” in

pictures. Now that you know that your brain’s main job is to protect you from harm and danger, what pictures do you think are produced most often? Your thinking is mostly in the “what could go wrong” category so your brain is creating pictures of what could go wrong much more often than it is creating pictures of what could go right.

Visualization creates an “experience”. You can take a real hammer and pound a real nail into a board. Or you can imagine yourself taking a hammer and pounding a nail into a board. Both register as “experiences” in your subconscious brain. Using visualization works really well with things you have been unsuccessful at. For example, let’s say you’ve hit your thumb and bent the nail the last few times you tried to hammer a nail. Visualization can help you “register” successful experiences of pounding a nail! The reason you hit your fingers or bent the nail is likely you were nervous (your subconscious was unconfident) so you were thinking this while attempting to hit the nail. After a week of visualizing successfully pounding in the nail, when you go to actually pound in the nail you won’t feel nervous because your subconscious thinks: “heck, I’ve done this before, piece of cake!” With this thought, you’ll be much more likely to successfully hit the nail!

Visualization also works to create emotional associations to help a person create change. In my

book “Weight Loss Failure is NOT your Fault” I shared the story of Susan who developed a strong association of relaxation and success with drinking wine. She wanted to stop drinking wine because she found herself eating junk food with and after her wine and from this she’d gained 20 pounds. I



asked her, “*Why does it matter what you weigh?*” to find her emotional reasons. She stated that she was single and didn’t want to be rejected by men and that overweight lawyers are viewed as lazy and less effective.

So I had her visualize men painfully rejecting her while she was drinking her wine and also visualize her failing miserably in court and her boss blaming it on her wine drinking and weight. These images were burned into her subconscious through visualization and in a week Susan could tell that the pull to drink wine had weakened considerably!

Some nights she didn’t feel like drinking wine at all and instead went to the gym to exercise. She began to also visualize herself as a strong lawyer as she lifted weights. She saw her tone and muscular arms, legs and abs. She visualized people in the court room (other lawyers and the judge) impressed with how strong and athletic looking she was and how this radiated in her personality—almost hypnotically! This really appealed to her and soon she had created a new association of success with weight lifting and this became her new habit that replaced wine drinking. After 9-months of dedicated weight training and a healthy diet, Susan decided to enter a fitness contest and took 3rd place her first time out!



So visualization does two important things:

- 1. Helps you to develop confidence in doing something you want to be successful at.**
- 2. Helps you program associations to what it is you want to change.**

How to use visualization

To make visualization help you create the life you want, here a few tips:

- 1. Make your visualizations as “real” as possible by seeing every detail.** Real experiences include everything you saw, heard, smelled, felt and even tasted. By imagining all the details of what you saw, heard, smelled, felt and tasted, you create a “real” imagined experience. For example, if you wanted to visualize yourself on a beach, you would imagine not only what you see on the beach, but the sounds of the waves, seagulls, people at the bar laughing, someone closing a door behind you, kids playing in the

water, a distant stereo playing, etc. You would also feel the chair under your body, the sun warming your skin, the breeze going over your body. You would also smell the sea air, the grill smoke from the restaurant and perhaps the faint smell of someone smoking in the area. You could also taste the cool refreshing drink you had by your chair. The more detail you imagine, the more real it will “feel” to you and the greater imprint on your subconscious programming.

2. **Set up a list of things you want to visualize.** You want to visualize two things. The outcome and what you need to do to get the outcome. For weight loss, you would visualize yourself looking the way you want to look and all the positive feedback you would get and how you would feel. You would also visualize what you need to do to get to that goal which would be the specific things you must change like choosing an apple over chips. Choosing to go to bed hungry rather than full. Choosing to go to the gym on Thursday nights rather than watch TV.

Make a list of things and put them in your binder. So perhaps this week you might visualize yourself going to bed hungry and then yourself on the beach looking thin and sexy! After 2 weeks of this visualization, you then might visualize choosing an apple in the afternoon vs. the chips from the vending machine and then go to the beach scene or a new scene of success. After 2 more weeks, you might switch to visualizing setting the alarm early to go to the gym on Saturday mornings and then go to the success scene.

3. **Set up a time to practice important visualization.** If you want to harness this power in your life, you’ll need to set-up a time to visualize the very important things you want to change in your life. A great time to visualize is before falling asleep. When you shut off all other sensory input, your visualization takes center stage with your subconscious mind. So instead of counting sheep, see yourself successfully choosing the apple over the bag of chips. Visualize the details of yourself successfully enjoying a book at 8pm rather than a bowl of ice cream. Visualize the details of walking on a tropical beach in a swimsuit and feeling really good about yourself.
4. **Use visualization to control your emotions.** When you feel anxious, stressed or worried, use positive visualization to combat the feelings that hurt you. These feelings are just your brain creating negative pictures of what might, could, should or may happen. It is all imaginary! **So battle this imaginary crap that is hurting you with your own imaginary thoughts!** Visualize things working out. People doing the opposite of

what you're worrying about. Or, visualize something totally funny or crazy! This will instantly change how you feel because you can't visualize two things at the same time.

For example, let's say you are anxious and stressed out because you forgot to pay the phone bill and your husband is going to be furious about the \$20 late fee! You could visualize his head 3 times as big as normal and his voice in a funny tone saying, "Look, my head is swelling because I am perfect!" "Did you know I was perfect?" "I am sooo smart, I think \$20 is worth not having sex for a week!" Then see him turn and walk away. Repeat this visualization a few times and you'll be laughing out loud and find yourself feeling much better!



You can use this trick (skill) anytime you feel any kind of stress! Somebody honks their horn at you because you cut in front of them and you feel really bad because you weren't paying attention. Instead of feeling guilty that you almost caused an accident, visualize the other person's car blowing up or maybe the other person calling you up to apologize for honking his horn at you and giving you the finger. Whatever scenario would make you feel better or laugh, create it in your thinking through visualization. Get into this habit and you have the control of your emotions like no one else you know! And soon people will be asking you, "What's your secret?"

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. **Use your list of things you need to start to like and dislike as a starting point for making a visualization schedule.** You have probably thought of some other things by now so be sure to add them to your list. Start with the most important change first. Ask yourself, "What is standing MOST in my way to weight

A screenshot of a worksheet titled "What do I need to Like?". The worksheet includes a small image of a woman's face in the top right corner. Below the title is a paragraph of text: "I have a friend who likes eating healthy foods and loves to go for a bike ride every evening. What are the things that people who love the body and health want to do that I currently dislike or don't do? What do I need to start liking?". Below this is a table with two columns: "Item" and "Comments". The table has 10 rows, numbered 11 through 20. At the bottom of the worksheet, there is a small box with the text: "List the things you want to start liking to change your life and then check them off as you successfully reprogram yourself and start liking each item." The logo for "BODYCHOICE" is at the bottom left of the worksheet.

loss?” If your answer is binge eating after work, you could start with visualizing yourself eating just an apple and then waiting an hour to eat your dinner or going for a walk, or doing laundry—anything opposite to binge eating.

2. **Use the NEW vision sheet to develop your new vision of yourself.** Find a picture in a magazine or do a search using Google images. It doesn't have to look exactly like you, just the body you want to live in. Of course be realistic so you'll feel a real sense of "I can get there!" In the same regard, don't be afraid to aim high. It's better to aim high and come up a bit short than to aim-low and be satisfied with a low result.
3. **Start using visualization every day to combat your automatic negative visualizations.** This can be one of the most powerful tools in feeling good and eliminating stress and anxiety...but you have to remember to do it until it becomes a habit! Don't miss out on this opportunity to create a new habit that will result in you being and doing better which will result in some really cool things in your life like:
 - a. People will like to be around you more and see you as a leader
 - b. You'll become a much better parent—crappy parenting comes from stressed parents.
 - c. You'll have a better marriage—crappy relationship skills come from stressed people!

4. **Visualization is an extremely powerful tool which can help you be more confident, cure depression, sleep disorders, shyness, improve your golf game and prevent or cure diseases!**

It's something worth reading more about!! I recommend: "Visualization for Change" by Patrick Fanning

