



Visualization is conscious, organized daydream in which you deliberately take charge of your mental images and decide what you want to see.

HOW DO VISUALIZATIONS WORK?

A large portion of the cerebral cortex is devoted to vision. The cerebral cortex's main function is to process information that comes from the retinas of the eyes. When we close our eye, this function turns inward. It is at this point that one of the most important channels for the mind/body connection become available.

The subconscious mind seems to make distinction between real visual information and the vivid sensory images conjured up during a visualization exercise. Your mind and body react much the same to imaginary experiences as they do to real experiences. Visualization works because your subconscious mind experiences reality indirectly by watching these vivid sensory images. It's like you write and produce your own story, and broadcast it on this little TV screen in your head. Your subconscious mind watches the broadcast but interprets this information as real.

Research has shown that you can if you can hold a vivid image in your mind for 35 seconds, you will be able to move information into your subconscious. Using visual images is the most effective way to access our subconscious mind. The best times to practice visualizations are just before falling asleep at night and upon waking in the morning. During these periods of altered consciousness, you are particularly relaxed and you mind is more open to suggestion.

The more senses you involve, the more successfully your visualization will absorb into your subconscious mind and therefore influence your behavior. Visual images with a strong emotional response are most effective. Intensity of senses, emotion, lighting, volume all influence the effectiveness of your visualization.

CREATE YOUR OWN VISUALIZATION

1. Find a quiet, comfortable place. Best after you have climbed in bed, before you go to sleep.
2. Close your eyes.

3. Clear your mind of all thoughts. Train your mind to be quiet.
4. Pay attention to your breathing.
5. Take a deep slow breath through your nose. Inhale as much air as you can and hold it for 2 seconds. Become aware of the tension in your lungs and sense the tension in your muscles.
6. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Feel your body deflating like a balloon as you release the air from your lungs. Think the word “relax” every time you exhale.
7. Continue slowly inhaling and exhaling in this fashion until your body feels limp and heavy.
8. Now that your body is relaxed, allow your breathing to become slow and rhythmic.
9. It is now time to create your mental movie. Think of a scene that is familiar and pleasant. Somewhere you can feel safe and relax.
10. Envision this place in detail. See what you see brightly and intensely. Try to envision as many details as you can.
11. Visualize a scene involving emotion. It’s important to experience emotion which is uplifting, cheery, self-affirming, and celebrates life.
12. Hear pleasant sounds clearly.
13. Feel the temperature of environment you are visualizing. Is it warm and soothing or cool and refreshing? Imagine the temperature that makes you feel the most relaxed.
14. Smell the air. Imagine your favorite fragrance.
15. Now put yourself in the picture.
16. See yourself peaceful and relaxed. Feel how calm your body is.
17. Experience this visualization with lots of positive emotion and vividly use all the senses with as much intensity as possible: sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. Try to hold this vivid image with this intensity for a minute.

EXAMPLES OF RELAXING VISUALIZATION

1. See yourself floating on a cloud. You are high above the earth and far away from all the hassles of life. Your body is weightless. Feel how gently the cloud supports your body. Feel fresh air caressing your face and the sun warming your body. Experience the peaceful silence in the air. Feel yourself floating.
2. See yourself laying on a huge hammock. The hammock is swinging back and forth through the air. Your body is heavy and sinks into hammock as it effortlessly swings back and forth. Fresh, invigorating air rushes past your face. The only sound you hear is the rushing air as the hammock bursts through it.
3. Go to your happy place. It’s a place that you have been to, where you were totally able to relax. It’s a place where you were able to release every care and become as one with the environment. If you have never been somewhere like this, then use a picture you have seen that you believe to be such a place.

A FINAL WORD ABOUT VISUALIZATIONS

Visualization is a powerful tool to help you minimize the stress response in your brain and body. Visualizations help train your brain and body to relax. They use your imagination to reprogram

your subconscious mind and create a more positive calm reality in your brain. Your body will respond positively to this new reality in your brain and will react more gently to stress, releasing smaller amounts of stress hormones in response to stressful stimuli. The more often you practice relaxing visualizations, the more quickly and effectively your body will shut down the stress response and transition into a state of relaxation.