

**CREATIVE
VISUALIZATION**

**IF YOU CAN
SEE IT, YOU
CAN GET IT**

Steven C. Keller

Creative Visualization

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To learn more about creative visualization and other popular personal development concepts, explore my best-selling book “*This Has To Be Cheaper Than Therapy*” available on Amazon.

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Creative Visualization: If You Can See It, You Can Get It

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INTRODUCTION

You've probably heard the saying, "If you want to be it, you must first believe it to be true," which in essence is the foundation of a very powerful mental exercise called "**Creative Visualization.**"

Creative visualization is so effective that numerous professional athletes and world leaders use it on a daily basis to improve their performance and ensure success in their careers.

Perhaps the most famous example of successful creative visualization was a study conducted on Russian athletes prior to the 1980 Olympics. Scientists and coaches divided these highly ambitious and talented athletes into four training groups, each of which took on a different training program:

- The first group put 100% of their effort into physical exercise, and did not receive any creative visualization training at all.
- The second group spent 75% of their time on physical training, but were taught creative visualization techniques and devoted 25% of their time to mental exercise.
- The third group divided their time 50/50, devoting half their time to mental exercise and the other half to physical exercise.
- The fourth group devoted 75% of their time to mental exercise and only 25% to physical exercise.
- Shockingly, the group who devoted 75% of their time to mental exercise was the group who performed most impressively.

As you can imagine, the results of this study swept the athletic training world. It is now typical for professional athletes to devote at least a quarter of their training efforts to mental exercises.

Athletes, Celebrities, World Leaders

While creative visualization and other mental exercises have become status quo in sports psychology and training programs, this method of mental exercise has not remained limited just to the athletic community. Many celebrities, world leaders and highly successful business owners have attributed their success to variations of this practice.

Actor Will Smith, business magnate and philanthropist Bill Gates, media personality Oprah Winfrey, and ex-governor of California and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger are all known for publicly professing their reliance on and belief in the power of positive thinking and visualization exercises.

Jim Carrey, a highly successful Hollywood actor, wrote an "abundance check" to himself for \$10 million and dated it for 1995 (eight years after the date he wrote the check) and set it aside. Over the years he visualized making that amount of money for acting on a regular basis, focusing his mental energies on willing his dream to come true. Then in 1994 he was paid \$10 million dollars for his role in the smash hit comedy *Dumb and Dumber*. Carrey "creatively visualized" his career and the income he would be making.

Can Creative Visualization Work For Everyone?

Studies have shown that people benefit tremendously from creative visualization. You can improve pretty much any skill including test-taking abilities, interviewing skills, public speaking finesse, athletic performance and discipline. This practice can help you actualize your dreams and goals instead of just wishing for them to come true.

Creative visualization is used to help people lose weight, quit smoking, heal from loss, get a dream job, complete a diploma, write a book or screenplay, or make more money.

However, most people don't take the time to learn what creative visualization is or how to develop skills to use it to their benefit.

To maximize results of such a practice, you need to establish creative visualization routines that you'll execute on a regular basis. While even the smallest of mental exercise efforts can bring about tangible changes and growth, a regular visualization practice will bring about the most significant results.

It's challenging to take on a new practice that involves your mind, which is why it's important to learn the science and philosophy behind creative visualization, and how people who have experienced success have implemented these exercises into their lifestyles. Once you understand the principles of creative visualization, you'll find the motivation and determination to establish a results-oriented practice.

What is Creative Visualization?

Creative visualization is a mental discipline that requires more than just imagining doing something. It involves mental training, focus, detailed visualization and attention to the correlated physiological responses that accompany such mental exercises. The end result of creative visualization is an improvement in performance, confidence, attitude and success.

The Beginnings of Creative Visualization

Wallace Delois Wattles (1860-1911) is credited as the founder of creative visualization, but several variations have undoubtedly been practiced throughout history. Your ancestors probably envisioned themselves shooting a deer while crafting a new bow and arrow set. Pilgrims imagined surviving the winter in New England before they crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Successful people have envisioned and focused on their goals and dreams for as long as mankind has been setting sights and taking aim at achievements.

What made Wattles different was he studied and refined the power of positive thinking, and turned it into a discipline that could be repeated by others. He wrote the book *The Science of Getting Rich* in which he described visualization exercises that could help a person become wealthy. His book, that became the birthplace and springboard of the American creative visualization movement, is still quite popular today.

Wattles encouraged readers to envision success in vivid detail, and to regularly practice visualization techniques as a primary method of pursuing success. Wattles himself spent time visualizing specific goals and paths to success, and would write about them as part of his practice. He talked about how important it is to visualize your goals until you believe they will

happen and feel as if they already have happened. He also discussed the steps to get you to that point.

Utilizing his own visualization practice Wattles wrote several books, made a lot of money, and ran for political office. He encouraged his readers to test his visualization methodologies upon themselves and not take his word for it, as he believed each person could tap into their full potential.

While Wattles is recognized as the first significant American proponent of creative visualization, Russia and Asia have also become involved in the development of the techniques. Russia is the birthplace of sports psychology visualization techniques, and Buddhists have long recognized the power of visualization (often practiced in tandem with physical exercise such as yoga.)

Creative visualization has been taught under a variety of names and teachers over the years. And has become increasingly popular in the United States, especially since many famous people have credited their success to this practice.

The Science Behind Creative Visualization

You're probably asking yourself how does creative visualization work? How can mental effort be more powerful than physical exercise for athletes? How can "believing you can" help you make more money, lose weight, quit smoking or get a better job?

Creative visualization requires the development of several disciplines -- all of which are mental, and all of which work together to produce powerful results. These disciplines will open new pathways inside your brain. As you learn to relax, focus, visualize and affirm your dreams, you'll be exercising your brain in a way that enhances its development. You'll forge new neuron development and establish new thought patterns.

Scientists aren't sure why creative visualization works so well, but many researchers agree that it indeed does work. Some researchers believe in quantum physics, and that creative visualization puts you in touch with a parallel existence in which you're already experiencing success by tapping into an energy source or potential source.

Other scientists believe that the power of self-fulfilling prophecy (when you believe that something will happen, you make changes to enable that truth to materialize). Still others believe the emotional, mental and physical changes that occur due to these practices will help you grow so much that you'll find ways to make your dreams come true.

However the science works, creative visualization is indisputably a powerful practice. And once fully embraced, it enables people to make significant changes and realize previously unattainable goals.

Identifying Your Goals

To begin, you must identify what it is you wish to see changed in your life. Do you want to be rich? Run your own business and be more successful? Get published? Get married? Get in shape? Quit smoking? A better soccer player, runner, singer, dancer?

Once you've chosen a goal, you'll need to get more detailed about what success looks like for you.

For example, if you choose “I want to be rich” as your goal, you need to dissect the details of the goal. It’s not enough to think, *I want to have a lot of money*; you need to think about how you want to make money.

What kind of career do you want to have? What sorts of success are you envisioning? What would a day in your life as a successful, wealthy person look like? What would you do for a job? What would your house look like? Your lifestyle? Your family?

Therefore, what goal would you like to focus on? You’re going to revisit it frequently, so you’ll want to write notes in a journal or on your computer to reinforce your focus as you go through the steps of creative visualization.

Next write your goal on something decorative you can look at it frequently throughout this guide. You may wish to use color markers, print it on poster paper using an online template service, or a program on your computer. Many people use cardstock and scrapbooking materials to make a handy, attractive goals card they keep on their bathroom mirror, next to their bed, or inside their goals journal. Take your time with this as you want it to be something you enjoy looking at.

Ready to Get Started?

Now that you’ve narrowed your goal down to something specific, you should be ready to start. Creative visualization is a very practical process, so you’ll first want to read through the following chapters just to get an idea of how the exercises work.

After you feel like you understand the individual disciplines and how they work together, you’ll want to go back through the chapters one by one. Set aside a specific amount of time each day (no less than 15 minutes of concentrated time, which includes set-up), and tackle the exercises one at a time. Repeat them in each chapter until you’ve mastered each technique, then move on to the next step.

It’s been found that people who don’t experience significant change or success are unwilling to devote concentrated time to the practice. Fifteen minutes a day isn’t a lot of time (you probably spend that much time surfing the Web or watching mindless television each day). However, if used correctly those 15 minutes could change your life and help you establish an effective creative visualization practice.

ESTABLISH A NEW SELF-IMAGE

As you begin your creative visualization practice, you'll need to alter some of your previous habits once you come to understand how positive thinking, believing in yourself, and exercising very detailed and specific visualization of success or change can affect your life.

The Power of Negativity

Up until now you've probably been practicing the opposite of positive creative visualization and considered yourself to be limited in several ways. Perhaps you've assumed you can't lose weight, quit an addiction, or get a job promotion. You may have assumed you can't find a loving romantic partner, or that you aren't pretty or talented enough to succeed in one area or another.

These assumptions are very powerful, negative implants, and can block your growth, change, and success.

In the same way that positive visualization helps you grow and affects even the subtlest of social cues and actions, negative visualization has the opposite effect when helping you to interact with people in ways that can help you succeed. When you limit yourself or criticize yourself mentally, you begin to believe negative things about yourself which affects the way you hold yourself, conduct yourself, handle disappointments, and anticipate success or failure.

Negative assumptions cause you to attract negative people and circumstances into your life. They cause you to miss opportunities, sabotage your efforts to change, and stunt your growth. Negative thoughts increase stress, which in turn increases the production of a chemical called *cortisol* that wears down your immune system, causes you to gain weight, and inhibits mental and physical health.

In other words, you need to combat negativity before you can move on to positive thinking mental exercises. If you try to force positive thoughts into places where negativity has taken up residence for many years, you will fail.

It's like placing a happy face bandage on top of a festering wound. First you must clean out the negative emotions before you can begin fostering a positive attitude. When this has been accomplished, you'll use proactive creative visualization exercises to create positive changes such as material and financial success, relationship development and/or personal growth.

Disarming the Negative

Believing negative perceptions keeps you from moving forward, which is why you need to address any negative assumptions and replace them with what you know to be true about yourself. Only then will you be able to unconditionally accept that you have potential, are valuable, and are deserving of success, growth and happiness.

The first creative visualization exercises are aimed at removing the power of those negative thoughts and replacing them with truthful, healthy thoughts. For instance, it doesn't help you to just think *I'm thin* if you're overweight. But if you can remove your self-hatred for being overweight and replace it with self-love and acceptance -- then envision yourself becoming physically active -- you will lose weight and become the person you wish to be.

Do you see how this practical, attainable and positive process can be more effective than just telling yourself "I am (whatever it is that you want to be but haven't gotten there yet)"? By taking

logical small steps, you can change your self-image and beliefs about your capabilities and self-worth.

Exercise 1: Let Go of Negativity

What you'll need for this exercise:

- A stopwatch or egg timer
- A goals card
- Your goals journal
- A place where you can be alone for a minimum of ten minutes

Find a place where you can be alone and settle into a comfortable position. You can lie down, sit down, or stretch out on the bed – anywhere you feel fully relaxed. You may wish to use pillows or cushions for support since you don't want to be distracted by any physical discomfort.

Silently read your goals card, then set it aside. Close your eyes and think about your goal for a few moments. If you listen to your thoughts very carefully, you can hear your inner critic telling you all the reasons why you could fail. These self-accusations will feel incredibly personal and possibly painful.

Although some of your negative thoughts are fleeting, others have become embedded in your psyche and can prevent you from believing in yourself enough to engage in effective creative visualization.

Now devote ten minutes to the following exercise of releasing negativity and embracing acceptance. (Set your stopwatch or timer so you won't be distracted thinking about how much time has passed.)

As you breathe in, think about your goal and listen to those negative messages telling you why you could fail. Hold your breath for a few moments, then repeat the words "I am letting go" as you slowly exhale. You might envision your negative thoughts and feelings as carbon dioxide or rocks (something you can exhale or throw). As you exhale, imagine yourself forcefully expelling the carbon dioxide, or throwing the emotional rocks from your life.

The next step is to replace negative thoughts with positive solutions. For example, your goal might be to lose weight and your negative thoughts are "I've never succeeded before" or "I can't stop overeating." (By the way, most people think meaner things than other people would say to them as they can be their worst critics.) As you repeat the exercise you should think things like, "I have lost weight before, so I can do it again." Or "I can eat healthy if I manage my emotions."

Think these affirmative thoughts as you hold your breath, and enjoy holding them as they are truthful, hopeful and healthy. As you exhale, release your negativity since it's full of useless emotions, and holds no weight or power over you. Focus on embracing your positive thoughts and releasing all negative thoughts as you inhale and exhale.

When your ten minutes is up, jot a note in your journal if anything significant happened during the exercise. For example, maybe you realized you could make healthier choices if you wrote out a meal plan each week. Or that you've been too hard on yourself about something that happened with a friend and are ready to let go. Continue this exercise every day until you feel yourself making progress.

Exercise 2: Robbing Negativity of its Power

Negative thoughts are extremely powerful because they can hurt you. People tend to focus on negative experiences more than positive for a very logical reason: they are hardwired to survive by avoiding things that hurt. For example, snake bites hurt and can possibly result in death. After being bitten by a snake once, man learned to watch more carefully where he walked and to wear protective gear on his feet.

A good example of being “hardwired” to survive is taking the criticism of a first employer too seriously, then believing you’re not smart enough to start your own business or get a good job. You focus on the negative even though you’ve had several positive, affirming experiences that tell you you’re good enough to get that job or try for a promotion. Why would you do that? Because the pain of failing is so acute from that first negative memory that it outweighs any subsequent positive experiences.

In order to grow and succeed, you need to eliminate negative impressions you’ve gathered along the way, which requires using logic and cognitive therapy as part of your creative visualization.

What you’ll need for this exercise:

- A stopwatch or egg timer
- A goals card
- Your goals journal
- A place where you can be alone for a minimum of 15 minutes

Read the goals card and identify a repetitive negative thought or assumption. For example, if you want to make a lot of money in an online business but you’ve failed before, you might have thoughts like “I’m not disciplined enough”, or “I don’t have any good ideas”, or “Nothing I do is original, everyone is doing it.” Write the negative thought down in your journal.

Now write as many “truths” about yourself to disprove that negative assumption. For example, you have a great idea for an online business and believe it could take off. However, you’ve tried an online business before (maybe as an affiliate marketer), and you only made a few dollars before you gave up. A negative thought might be “I’ve failed before, I’ll fail again. So why bother?”

Now you need think back on your life, and write down five things where you set a goal and succeeded at something you’re proud of. Your list may look something like:

- I finished college and now have a degree in _____.
- I promised myself I’d wait until my student loans were paid off before I bought a car, and I stuck to that promise.
- I wanted to run a 5K and I did.
- I wanted to learn how to play the guitar, and now I can play many songs.
- I decided to take up knitting, and knitted an entire sweater.

It’s effective to write a specific list like the one above, but you can choose more generic achievements such as:

- I wanted to be a good mom, and feel like I’m a really good parent.

- I set out to be financially independent, and I've never had to ask my parents for money since becoming an adult.

Once you have your list of truth-based counter-arguments that defy your negative statement or fears, you can continue the exercise and rob negativity of its power over you.

To begin the exercise:

- Settle into a comfortable position in your quiet place.
- Set your stopwatch or egg timer for 15 minutes.
- Choose an example from your list.

Close your eyes, replay the experience from beginning to end, and allow yourself to recall all the details.

Let's take the example of getting a college degree. How old were you when started college? Were you the first in your family to go to college? Were some of your classes hard? How did you pay for college? Did it require sacrifice for you to get your degree? As you replay the experience, applaud yourself for overcoming the same obstacles you think you'll have if you start an online business.

If you finish reviewing the first success story before the timer goes off, pick another time where you succeeded, relive the experience, and give yourself a pat on the back. Continue this until the timer goes off.

Repeat this exercise each day until you feel like the power of that negative thought has been obliterated. If you identify several negative thoughts that are constantly pestering you, use this technique until they no longer have credibility.

Establishing a New Self-Perception

Remember, this exercise is about robbing negativity of its power over you, so you need to learn how to dispel any nagging, destructive thoughts that keep you from your accomplishments. Identifying your mental blocks diffuses negative thoughts.

You may find these exercises to be less exciting as you practice them, but don't get discouraged! All this means is you are effectively destroying your internal naysayers, and it's time to move on to something more proactive like embracing affirmation.

Don't be surprised if you need to return to Exercises 1 and 2 every now and then to banish negativity and self-doubt. It's natural to slay destructive thoughts only to have them periodically resurface. You'll find it's easier to deal with negativity as your practice becomes more habitual and part of your daily routine.

UNLEASH THE POWER OF AFFIRMATIONS

As you establish your creative visualization practice, you'll want to learn how to use the power of affirmations. Unlike the exercises described in the first chapter, they take only a few seconds and you can practice them frequently throughout the day.

Affirmations build upon each other, and strengthen your self-image to help you move on to more intensive visualization exercises with genuine faith in yourself. In order to see tangible results, you need to find the one that works best for you and use it every single day.

Exercise 3: Your Mantra

Everyone has negative or positive words they repeat during times of stress or challenge that build up or tear down their self-belief. But they may not realize those words are "mantras" (powerful words or phrases that may or may not have meaning in the same way as a sentence).

In this exercise, you will create an empowering mantra you'll repeat several times during a day at scheduled and unscheduled times.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- Your goals journal

You'll write down several short, affirming phrases that apply specifically to your goal. For example, if you want to write a novel and get it published -- but are afraid you're not good enough -- you might want to choose something like:

- Just get the words down on the page
- Practice makes perfect
- All writers revise
- That's what editors are for
- I know I can write
- I was born to write
- Writing is my talent
- If they can do it, so can I!

The purpose of this mantra is to keep you focused on the goal and defeat your inner critic. Repeat it at least five times a day. Post reminders on your phone, computer, or on sticky notes around the house and repeat them religiously.

When you tire of one mantra, choose the next as rotating your mantras will keep you focused and positive. Write down any thoughts that arise while repeating your mantra, as they are very foretelling about your desires and mental blocks.

Exercise 4: Positive Labeling

Human beings tend to set their own internal expectations. Unfortunately, because they hate failure they often label themselves in ways that limit their self-confidence and performance. The

point of this exercise is to identify yourself as successful even before you've experienced the success.

You may have heard the saying "Act like you've been there before." Football players envision making touchdowns, practice making touchdowns, and act as though they've made a touchdown long before they play a game.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- Your goals journal

Write down labels describing people who've already achieved the success you wish to attain. For example, if your goal is to get in shape and exercise is part of your plan, you'll want to give yourself a label (even if you've just started) such as;

- I am a runner
- I am a biker
- I am a swimmer
- I am an athlete
- I am a mountain climber

Likewise, if you're starting a new business you'll want to refer to yourself as:

- I'm my own boss
- I'm the CEO of a company
- I'm a small business owner
- I'm an entrepreneur
- I'm a freelance _____ (name the type of freelancing, i.e., photographer, copywriter, interior designer, furniture maker, etc.).

Labeling yourself empowers you to become successful and live your dream. If you continually say things like "I'm trying to become a runner, or "I'm a wanna-be writer", or "I'm trying to start a business," you'll have a much harder time succeeding. So you need to assume the affirmative "I am" to help embed the belief in your subconscious.

If you have a smartphone, have it call you by your new label. As you lace your running shoes, remind yourself that you are a runner. As you log in to your website say "I am the boss" or "I am a freelance photographer," and continue this positive labeling throughout the entire pursuit of your goal. Think it, believe it, own it, become it!

Exercise 5: Symbolic Affirmations

As you build your self-confidence, you'll want to find something symbolic to help keep your mind on your goal.

For example, if your goal is to fall in love and get married, you might have a tiny pewter heart you can hold from time-to-time. If your goal is to get a promotion and make more money, you might carry a key symbolic of you being the key to your success, or a money clip with a dollar sign on it.

Examples of symbolic items:

- The running shoe piece from a Monopoly game (for those who wish to run a marathon or get in shape).
- A smooth, polished stone (which is considered a symbol of specific characteristics like fidelity or strength).
- A bracelet with charms representing each aspect of your goal, etc.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- A symbolic item

Once you've chosen your symbolic item, you'll want to carry it or wear it wherever you go. Examine it carefully to remind you of your goal, and hold it in your hand several times throughout the day. Re-examine it before going to bed to keep yourself committed to your goal and awake with it top-of-mind the next morning.

Some people find it helpful to combine their mantra with their symbolic item. Holding your item while repeating your affirmation can be very powerful (like a buy one, get one free sale!). In addition, every time you see this symbol (on a coffee cup, the side of a building, in an advertisement, on someone's shirt) use this as an affirmation to keep you on your path.

Continue this practice even after you've reached your goal to never lose sight of your success.

Exercise 6: Written Affirmations

Remember when your teacher had you write down the words you misspelled over and over? This is because writing (especially when done long-hand) establishes pathways to embed that information in your memory. In the same way, writing your goals and the steps you'll take to achieve them will solidify your self-belief.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- Your goals journal

Take the time to write out long-hand exactly what your journey will look like as you achieve your goal. Don't rush, and devote at least ten minutes per day to this exercise. Include what steps you'll take, how will people respond to you, and how you'll react. You can add details like:

- How long will it take you to reach your goal?
- What obstacles will you face, and how will you overcome them?
- How will you feel at each milestone as you work towards your goal?
- What mini-goals will you reach along the way? How will you feel when you reach each one of them?
- How will reaching this goal change your life?
- What benefits will you reap?
- How will you feel about yourself?

People rarely write long-hand anymore, which makes this exercise even more effective. Continue until you have nothing else to add to the story of your success. Then if you have another goal, you can repeat the process.

Exercise 7: Verbal Affirmations

People are verbal creatures. What you think is primarily in words, which is why what you say to yourself matters a great deal. In this exercise, you'll verbally affirm reaching your goal.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- Your goals journal
- A highlighter or colored pen
- A recording device, or two pieces of curved PVC pipe duct taped together to form a "C"

Now that you've written out the details of your success story, you need to take five to ten minutes each day to highlight or underline the best sentences and read them out loud.

Studies have shown that people absorb spoken material much easier than when reading it. One popular memorization technique is to create a "telephone" out of PVC pipe into which you'll speak your best lines of affirmation. Or record yourself reading them and replay it over and over. You'll be surprised at your emotional response when you hear your own voice telling you that you will succeed.

Convincing your mind through verbal affirmations is a very powerful psychological tool.

Repeat this exercise at least five minutes a day until you have exhausted all your written material. Then move on to Advanced Visualization Techniques.

ADVANCED VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

You've probably been breezing through the exercises, wondering if they will make any difference in achieving your goals. What you probably don't realize is that they've been preparing you to begin a more intensive visualization process.

Creative visualization requires you to:

- Focus your thoughts.
- Relax your mind and body to allow your subconscious to be infiltrated.
- Practice your exercises diligently and consistently.
- Be willing to go deeply into the exercises.

The following exercises will eventually merge into one exercise you'll repeat for the rest of the course. But for now you want to break them into three individual exercises, and put them together only after you feel you've mastered each one successfully.

Exercise 8: Relaxation

For visualization to be effective, you need to relax so you can allow your subconscious to change your deepest thoughts and expectations. This means you'll need to settle into a trance-like state by releasing tensions and open yourself up to possibilities.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- A quiet place where you can relax and be alone
- Pillows or cushions
- A stopwatch or egg timer

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position you can maintain for a minimum of ten minutes. Set your timer so you won't think about anything but the exercise.

Tighten as many muscles in your body as possible, and think about the word "STRESS" as you do so. Hold this position until it becomes too difficult; then release your muscles while thinking "RELEASE" as you relax your entire body.

Repeat this exercise for the full ten minutes or until you feel completely relaxed. Then you'll move into focusing your mind.

Exercise 9: Focusing Your Mind

Once you've relaxed, you'll switch from tightening and releasing your muscles into breathing. You've probably already discovered that your mind tends to dart from one thought to another. Your goal is to improve your ability to focus on a single thought, release all other thoughts, and prevent any distractions. This new-found ability will increase the effectiveness of your visualization exercises.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- A quiet place where you can relax and be alone
- Pillows or cushions

- A stopwatch or egg timer

Set your timer for ten minutes. Lie or sit down in a comfortable spot. Engage in the relaxation tightening and releasing exercise for eight repetitions. You should feel significantly relaxed at the end of the eighth set.

Now focus on your breathing for the remainder of the ten minutes. Empty your mind of all thoughts, enjoy the sensation of inhaling while holding your breath for a comfortable amount of time, and then slowly exhale.

Whenever an unwanted thought zips into your mind, let it go and refocus on the sensation of holding your breath and exhaling. Don't judge yourself if you get distracted by your thoughts. Just let them go, return your focus to your breathing, and continue this until the timer goes off.

You'll want to practice this for at least ten minutes a day until you feel like you're ready to add visualization.

Exercise 10: Visualization

Now that you've gotten a feel for relaxing into a trance-like state and focusing on a single thought, you're ready to begin your long-term visualization practice. You'll devote ten minutes to this technique, visualizing one tiny part of your success. Choose a different piece of your success puzzle each day, and make that the focus during your visualization practice.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- A quiet place where you can relax
- Pillows or cushions
- A stopwatch or egg timer
- Your goals cards and journal

Relax in a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. From your journal or goals cards choose one very specific piece of the story -- something you can redirect your mind to as you go through your exercise.

For example, if you want to lose weight you could focus on how you'll look once you reach your goal. Another time you might focus on what you'd look like in a stunning new outfit, or on the image of yourself running a race, feeling strong, sexy and powerful. Each day you'll choose one tiny piece of your transformation.

Set the timer, close your eyes and begin the relaxation exercise by tightening and releasing your muscles for eight repetitions.

Then focus on your breathing and envision the tiny piece of your transformation (how you'll look, feel, and celebrate when you reach your goal) as you breathe in. Hold your breath for a comfortable length of time and then exhale.

If anything negative comes into your mind force it from your mind as you exhale, and re-embrace the tiny piece of your success story as you inhale. Repeat these steps until the timer goes off as you release distracting thoughts, and refuse to get entangled in negative doubts or fears.

Use your notes to help you choose something to focus on each day, and repeat this exercise until you reach your goal (and thereafter if it feels like a tool you'd like to integrate into your routine).

MIND MOVIES

As you practice your visualization and make positive choices that get you closer to success, you'll find your stamina for the exercises will increase. You'll find it easier to focus on one thought at a time, and will come out of your sessions feeling relaxed, positive, and empowered.

Not bad for 10 to 15 minutes a day, right?

Now it's time to escalate your practice to new heights. So far you've been visualizing a very specific piece of your success story each day. But you're going to learn how to create mini "mind movies" that will help you get closer to your goal(s).

In a nutshell, you'll mentally rehearse what it's going to take for you to succeed, just like the Russian athletes did during their mental training. The ones who saw the biggest improvement spent hours envisioning themselves performing successfully, which paid off during the events and stirred a global awareness of sports psychology and the power of positive thinking and affirmations.

You probably don't have a lot of time to devote to mental exercises every day, but you can make a significant difference if you extend your visualization practice. You might want to visualize twice a day for ten minutes at a time, or once a day for 15 or 30 minutes. Whatever you choose, you'll want to evolve your practice into playing your mind movie where you succeed at meeting and exceeding your goals.

Exercise 11: Star in Your Own Movie

Decide on the amount of time you want to devote to your mind movie. Set the timer, and settle into your visualization as you always do by first relaxing, then focusing on your breathing.

When you get to the point where you'd start focusing on your success story, you'll want to open yourself up to experiencing a significant portion of your story (your "movie" as it were). For example, let's say your goal is to get married. Perhaps you were held back in the past due to your insecurities or believing you were destined to be alone. But you've been working on your affirmations, and are now ready to meet someone and settle down.

Your mind movie might be a play-by-play account of you meeting and winning over this charming person. Like a movie script, you could build scenes of the engagement ring, designing and having the wedding, the honeymoon, performing domestic tasks together in your new home, etc. You'll want to really sink into the details and fully participate in the "movie" as if it already happened and you're replaying the memory.

Let's say your goal is to get a new job as a top advertising artist. Your mind movie could star you in the interview as a well-dressed, intelligent professional. You could envision your resume and your portfolio showcasing your ability. You could flash forward to another scene where you're in your new position composing a catchy jingle or animating a blockbuster commercial. You could then move on to a scene where you're schmoozing with clients over dinner and drinks, feeling persuasive and charming and winning over yet another new client.

Enjoy your mind movie until your timer goes off. Jot down any inspirations and realizations from your visualization exercise. You may discover new tactics and strategies for success, which means the process is working!

Overcoming Roadblocks, Distractions and Challenges

As you become more comfortable with your visualization practice, you'll find yourself thinking about your goals throughout the day. You'll also start making choices that bring you closer to success.

As you start changing, you'll also encounter obstacles that may have blocked you from success in the past. For example, perhaps you've become sidetracked by some sort of work or personal drama, and you've temporarily put aside your visualization practice and the pursuit of your goals. You may feel like you've fallen off the wagon or lost your confidence.

You can overcome those setbacks by investing in a little extra visualization time. You probably won't have time to do it every day, but investing in a mind movie once a week can vault you over any obstacles and refresh your enthusiasm. Try the following mind movie exercise for extra fortitude to get through difficult times.

Exercise 12: Be a Hero/Heroine in Your Mind Movie

This exercise will help you overcome obstacles you might encounter while pursuing success. In your journal jot down what obstacles or setbacks you're facing, then quickly brainstorm a list of possible ways to overcome them. You don't need to make this a problem-solving session; just remain detached as if they were someone else's problems.

Now choose a solution or two from the list and prepare for your visualization exercise. Decide on the amount of time you want to devote to your mind movie, set the timer, then settle into your visualization time -- first relaxing, then focusing on your inhaling and exhaling. Allow yourself to feel the distress you're facing, and picture yourself as a character who needs help.

Next, allow yourself to become the hero/heroine, and make choices that will catapult you past the obstacles: You're brave enough to ask for the raise; you're strong enough to run the last mile. Rewind the movie and start over. Remain there until you've successfully progressed from the problem to the solution at least five times. By that point it won't matter that you lost some momentum, as this exercise will put you back on track.

The Power of Mind Movies

Starring in a mind movie is preparing you to expect only positive outcomes. Just like the Russian athletes mentally rehearsed their athletic performances, you are rehearsing your success until you make it real.

The difference between the two types of mind movies is focus. The first type focuses solely on success without allowing any problems or obstacles to intrude upon your exercise; the second focuses solely on overcoming obstacles. You'll want to stick with the first type whenever possible, introducing the second one only when you encounter a problem.

Deliberately introducing problems or obstacles that haven't happened can become a waste of emotional energy, and can foster doubt and negativity which is the opposite of what you want to think about. Just like a Disney movie and happy endings, you'll want to end your movie with a positive scene where all your problems are solved and success is in the bag.

USE YOUR SENSES TO TRIGGER VISUALIZATION

As you build your visualization practice you'll become more aware of the power of the mind-body connection, which is how your physical senses enhance your mental experiences.

Researcher Benedetto Sacchetti (with the National Institute of Neuroscience in Turin, Italy) explains this is because sensations such as touch, smell, sight and hearing are processed through the sensory cortex of the brain -- a more primal, base process than language or directives.

Because of this connection between your mind and body, your senses can do the following:

- Enhance mental and emotional experiences.
- Increase your ability to believe while experiencing a creative visualization.
- Let go of fear of failure as you tune into primitive sensual stimulation.

Too often your mind gets in the way and stops you from fully experiencing your emotions. You want to lose yourself in your hopes and dreams. But your inner critic interrupts and tosses doubts, fears and criticism on your visualizations like a bucket of ice cold water.

The key to these sensory-based exercises is shutting off your internal critic as you indulge your senses. Your mind is wired such that you experience something very emotive and primal, which is why a particular scent can arouse emotions contrary to your logic.

For example, you may be thinking about a problem at work when driving home. But then you feel a strong sense of homesickness and melancholy when you roll down your window and inhale the aroma of freshly cut grass. The scent is rooted in your psyche from a time when you mowed the lawn as a teenager, and it pulls you emotionally out of thinking about work to missing your hometown. Later that evening you may find yourself thinking about an old friend or planning a trip back home, and you won't even realize what triggered it.

Likewise, images can induce strong emotions. Let's say you're driving home thinking about a problem at work, and out of the corner of your eye you see something that frightens you. You're jolted from a sense of frustration over the work problem to a flight-or-fight response linked to seeing whatever is making you feel threatened. You may find that a lingering sense of danger remains with you for the rest of the evening, as if something dangerous is waiting for you. This is just one example of how the sense of sight is so powerful.

If you can successfully link an image, smell, sound, taste or sensation with a creative visualization, your belief in the visualization will increase. Coupling the sensation with the mental exercise validates its "reality" as it makes both your mind and body believe the sensation was actually experienced. It takes repetition and experimentation to get this right, but the payoff is worth the effort. Play around with the following exercises until you find one that works best for you.

Exercise 13: Using Images to Bring Your Vision to Life

Many people close their eyes so hard during their mind movies or visualization exercises that they have trouble "seeing" themselves. If this describes you, you could benefit from collages to provide images you're unable to produce on your own.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- Magazines
- Photos
- A computer and color printer
- Scissors
- Glue
- Poster board or extra pages inside your goals journal

You'll want to devote at least ten minutes a day to this project until it's finished.

Flip through magazines or photos, and clip out images that inspire you towards your goal. For example, if you wish to become a screenwriter you might clip out the words "screenplay – writer -- success – Hollywood -- Oscars." You might add scenes from movies you like, or photos of actors/actresses you'd like to see performing in your movie. You could look up pictures of Hollywood on your computer and print them out, or order a postcard with Hollywood Boulevard on it.

Once you've collected a sufficient number of images that represent your success (the more personal the better), glue them on the collage board or into your goals journal. Arrange them until they're aesthetically pleasing. Then hand copy or print your goal onto a strip of cardstock or construction paper and add it to the collage.

Now you can use the collage as a prop during your mind movie visualization exercises. Whenever you feel your mind drifting, or you get frustrated with your attempts to envision success, open your eyes, look at the collage, and try again. The visual images will stick with you, and help you to become more emotionally invested in the exercises.

Exercise 14: Using Color to Root Your Visualization

Colors evoke emotional reactions consciously and subconsciously, which is why you might feel angered by the color red or soothed by the color green. The emotional effects of color are recognized by marketing specialists who advise restaurants to paint walls red (so you'll eat more), and spas to paint walls pale blue (so you can relax more).

If you can add color to your visualization exercises, you'll experience a more intense and emotionally connected experience. Start with the following awareness exercise, then bring it into your daily visualization exercise.

For example, say you need help remaining cool and grounded during an interview or during the stress of starting a new business. You'll want to choose a calm color like green -- which becomes your signature color -- and bring it into your meditation sessions.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- Awareness throughout the day

Dedicate the day to noticing every shade of green you can. You might think this will be boring as green is green, right? This is exactly the type of generalization you're going to eradicate, because if you look around you'll see dozens of shades of green. Olive, sea foam, sage, pea, kelly, lawn, fern, evergreen, pine, lime, teal, aqua – on and on. Once you start noticing the many shades of green, you'll realize how much you've been missing.

See how many green items you can collect in one day. You may find a smooth green pebble or a green marble. Maybe you'll buy a pair of green earrings, or a necklace with a piece of polar jade stone hanging from it.

You'll benefit most from this exercise if you take the time to absorb and emotionally connect with the different shades. Do you prefer the exciting vibrant greens of spring, or the soothing dark moss green of a peat swamp?

Can you feel the effect of the color on your mood? Does one shade of green excite you, while another makes you feel melancholy? Do you associate any of these different shades with memories all the way back to your childhood?

When you indulge in your ten-minute mind movie or other visualization exercise later in the day, bring your calming color green into every scene. Pay attention to how your symbolic item feels as you mentally imagine yourself at a successful interview or in a conversation with a new client.

Use this exercise to emotionally root your visualization process by using color therapy to reach your subconscious emotions.

Exercise 15: Using Guided Imagery to Visualize

Some people find it easy to sink into a trance-like state if they listen to a recording that guides them through a story. If you find your mind wandering or have trouble moving through your mind movies, this might be the best exercise for you.

This exercise combines the power of auditory suggestion with mental images. It will take time to set up properly, but once you've gone through the initial set-up you'll be able to relax and enjoy the powerful effects of this exercise over and over with very little effort.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- A recorder
- A script that you will write
- Your goals journal
- A quiet place where you can relax and be alone
- Pillows or cushions

Re-read the success stories in your goals journals and highlight the best parts. Then write them into a script you can record and listen to as you relax at the end of each day.

Begin by telling yourself that you're going to hear your success story as though it's already happened. Speak softly and confidently into the microphone, and pause between sentences. Tell yourself that you're going to relax and enjoy the best visualization experience you've ever had, and that it will be very enjoyable if you can relax.

Talk yourself through the relaxation exercises, including the tightening and releasing of your muscles, and proceed to concentrating on your breathing. Then slowly, calmly, and confidently read your success story into the microphone, pausing between sentences so you can envision each step of the story.

When you get to the end of your story, tell yourself that you're going to dream about your success. Encourage your body to sleep deeply and restfully. Tell yourself that you'll wake up

refreshed and ready to take another step towards your success. Tell yourself how happy you are to be on your journey, and how convinced you feel that your goals will be reached and that your dreams will come true.

Then end the recording.

It may take you several attempts to get it right, but the end result will be an audio you can re-play every night. Many people find that visualizations like this right before going to sleep (or falling asleep to a guided imagery audio like this) vastly enhances their enthusiasm and motivation.

Use this audio when going to sleep or when you need a mentally gentle visualization exercise. This type of guided imagery experience is easier than a mind movie because you get to relax and follow along the story.

Exercise 16: Using Music to Enhance Your Visualization

Have you ever noticed how a particular song can make you feel excited and exhilarated, annoyed and irritated? Have you ever tried to memorize a phone number, a spelling, or a word by setting it to music? If you haven't, this exercise could be just what you need.

The power of music is impressive. People can memorize chemistry formulas, the names of states, capitols and American presidents, or passwords by setting them to music.

How will this help you with creative visualization? By combining music and mind movies you'll create your own "soundtrack" -- an emotionally powerful tool to remind you of your goals and dreams throughout a day.

How do you choose which music to use? Consider what emotions you need to succeed in meeting your goal. Are you trying to exercise more, and need motivation to push past when you don't feel like working out? Try an invigorating song like *Invincible* by OK Go. Do you need help remaining calm and secure while preparing for interviews or planning business strategies? Find some comforting instrumental or classical music. Want to settle into a comfy, loving night with your loved one? Choose a sexy blues song, or one that always makes you tingle (you know which one it is).

Some people find songs with lyrics to be particularly powerful; others prefer to focus on just the harmonic elements. Still others find chants to be particularly evocative.

Once you've chosen the music that evokes the emotion you desire (enthusiasm, serenity, determination, passion), play it during your mind movie. If you find the music to be too distracting read your goals card, listen to the song, then read your goals card again.

The beautiful thing about using music as a part of your visualization process is you can carry it with you and use it in the following situations:

- Before interviews
- Before meetings with prospective clients
- Before or during exercise
- Before or after dates
- Before cold calling while you're starting your business
- While doing paperwork

- While commuting
- Before an artistic venture
- Whenever you need an emotional boost

Music taps into your emotions and propels you into the right “mood space” by opening your mind to more effective visualization and dreaming.

Exercise 17: Use Aromatherapy to Heighten Your Experience

Aromas evoke emotions; in fact, the mind processes scents differently than any other sensation. A person experiences an immediate emotional response when olfactory sensors send messages to the brain even before the scent has been identified.

Smells cause people to respond in subtle or overt ways. A bad smell can repel you or make you feel queasy (i.e., the putrid stench of a swamp, a stockyard, or a skunk’s musk). A pleasant scent can arouse you or make you feel happy (i.e., a woman’s cologne, fresh-baked cookies, a turkey roasting in the oven, or newly-mowed grass.)

Some scents can relax you (geranium, lavender and lemon are used in spas; corporations are using scents to help their employees produce better; and nursing homes are using them to calm elderly patients with anxiety disorders). And some can excite you (peppermint has been proven to increase alertness and stimulate mental function).

The combination of scents and creative visualization can be very powerful. You can carry scents with you (essential oils are portable), and use them to evoke an emotional response when combating a difficult circumstance, a lag in enthusiasm, or just a pick-me-up to help you feel calm or sexy.

What you’ll need for this exercise:

- Essential oils, alone or with an infuser
- A quiet place where you can relax and be alone
- Pillows or cushions
- An egg timer or stopwatch

Adding an essential oil to your choice of visualization exercise can link you to an emotional response. For example:

- Lavender, geranium and chamomile evoke relaxation.
- Peppermint and citrus smells evoke enthusiasm and mental alertness.
- Cooking smells evoke domesticity and melancholy.
- Fresh outdoorsy scents (evergreens, grass, sandalwood, rosewood) are considered grounding, and evoke security and purpose.

Rub a drop or two of oil on your wrists – or put a few drops into an infuser -- and under your nose before you begin your visualization exercise (peppermint works great in the area on your forehead just above the nose to open the sinuses).

Using a drop or two before interviews, dates, meetings with clients, artistic endeavors, exercise, etc., can make you feel confident and empowered. Adding oils will help you get in touch with emotions that arise during your daily visualization exercises.

Exercise 18: The Power of Touch

In addition to olfactory, visual, and audio stimulation, you can use tactile stimulation to improve your visualization exercises.

Aversion therapy (the infliction of pain, like snapping a rubber band on your wrist when you want to stop thinking about something) and pleasure therapy (massaging your hands or rewarding yourself with something pleasurable like a cup of coffee or candy when you make a good choice) have been proven by behavior therapists to be effective.

Now you can find ways to use physical sensations – such as the power of touch -- to enhance your visualization exercises.

Earlier in the course you were asked to choose a symbolic item such as a key, a polished stone, or a charm bracelet to heighten your visualization exercises. (This is a good time to add that when chilled or heated your item can stimulate your senses even more!).

Studies on memory-enhancement (as reported on PBS's *This Emotional Life*) have shown that physical stimulation -- like plunging your hand into ice water -- can improve your memorization of key facts. Likewise, the handling of a warm key or a cold stone can enhance your visualization exercises, since physical stimulation embeds deeper into your mind.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- Your symbolic item, either heated or chilled
- A quiet place where you can relax and be alone
- Pillows or cushions
- A stopwatch or egg timer

Hold your symbolic item when conducting your mind movie. Press it into the palm of your hand, and convince your visualization to embed itself into your psyche. Memorize the texture and feeling of the object as you repeat your goal or mantra or listen to your success story. The combination of handling the totem plus the visualization exercise will thrust you into a deeper understanding of your goal.

NOTE: Some of the sensory exercises in this guide may trigger intense emotions and great forward movement as you pursue your goals. Others may not seem to help. But when you find an exercise that works well for you, repeat it often and work it into your creative visualization practice. You'll find what resonates and what doesn't – your mind/body connection never lies!

CHANNELING FLOW ACTIVITY

You've probably noticed that most of the exercises take between 10 to 15 minutes. They build upon each other, and can be integrated into each other. Some are meant to be performed individually, some melded together, but all are brief for a specific reason.

You don't need to take a lot of time to devote to your visualization practice. But you may feel that even ten minutes a day is too much, which is why it's important to incorporate "flow activities" into your exercises.

What is a "Flow Activity"?

A "flow activity" is what psychology professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi terms as "a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. It is a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter." Time flies when people participate in flow activities, and they emerge feeling rejuvenated and energized.

Csikszentmihalyi's research analyzed ways to increase mental and emotional happiness, reduce stress, and improve overall life satisfaction. He studied 2,300 volunteers to determine what sorts of activities resulted in better positive mood enhancement and life improvements.

Some examples of "flow" activities are:

- Knitting
- Swimming
- Painting a room
- Weeding a garden
- Mowing a lawn

Essentially a flow activity is something that keeps you busy with repetitive motion, but is mindless enough so you can think about something else while doing it. The motion soothes your mind and allows you to relax, while the activity is pleasant and challenging enough to prevent boredom or frustration, which results in an elevation of emotional satisfaction.

Combining Flow Activity with Visualization

Once you learn how to enter a trance-like state through a flow activity, you can combine it with visualization in a daydreaming kind of exercise. Instead of a focused, meditative visualization exercise such as a mind movie, you'll set your intention on your goal and allow yourself to drift into a relaxed state of daydreaming about success. This allows your energies to flow freely so you can fully embrace the experience without any obstacles.

Exercise 19: Athletic Flow Activity

Some of the most effective flow activity/visualization exercises involve a repetitive sport and daydreaming. Repetitive activities such as the following can put you in the right frame of mind:

- Jogging (at a pleasant pace that doesn't feel too exhausting)
- Walking
- Swimming

- Biking

All require very little thinking, but use enough energy and effort to qualify as a flow activity.

What you'll need for this exercise:

- A repetitive form of exercise
- Your goal mantra

As you start exercising, settle into a comfortable pace. Count steps or strokes, and repeat your mantra or a single-focus word to get yourself into the right frame of mind. Once the "flow" takes over and you feel yourself zoning out, let your mind wander into daydream territory.

Think about how it will feel when you've finally met your goal and experienced success. Don't try to solve problems or figure out how to get from here to there. Just enjoy the sensation of already having achieved success and bask in all its glory. (Repeat this exercise whenever you need to get some exercise, and you'll receive double the benefit!)

Exercise 20: Non-Athletic Flow Activity

If you're not an athlete, you can reap the same benefits from a non-athletic repetitive flow activity such as:

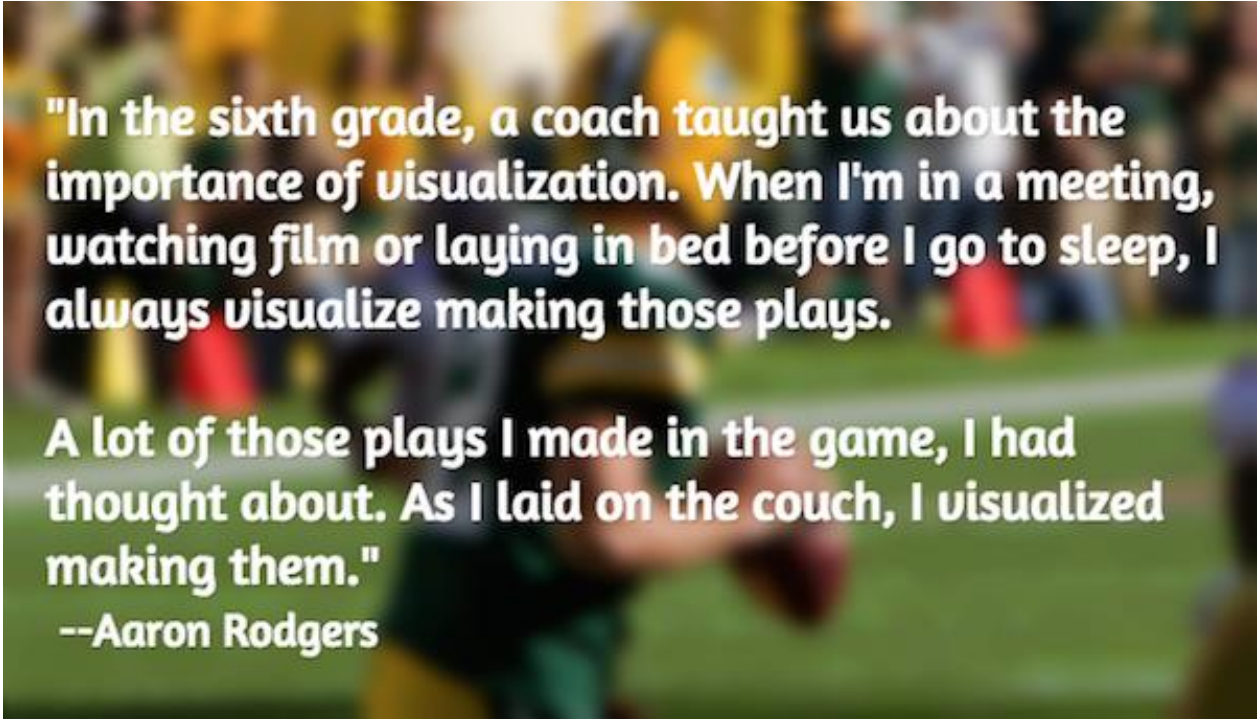
- Mowing the lawn
- Driving on the highway
- Painting a room
- Playing an instrument
- Staining your deck
- Vacuuming
- Folding laundry

The key is to lose yourself in the activity, and allow your mind to wander in and out as you envision your goal. You may wish to keep your goals card on hand so you can periodically glance at it and remind yourself to daydream about your success.

As you can see, both the athletic and non-athletic exercises are less formal than many of the others. However, you may come up with fabulous ideas on a road trip or while mowing your lawn; or you might find inspiration while painting a bedroom or shopping for groceries. It's a good idea to always carry a notepad and pen, or a Dictaphone, as you won't want to forget those nuggets of inspiration.

Combining flow activity and daydreaming will help you loosen thoughts that have been hiding behind conscious efforts and critical thinking. The end result will be you'll feel happier, more positive about your goals, and will be revived and ready to try once again.

CONCLUSION



"In the sixth grade, a coach taught us about the importance of visualization. When I'm in a meeting, watching film or laying in bed before I go to sleep, I always visualize making those plays.

A lot of those plays I made in the game, I had thought about. As I laid on the couch, I visualized making them."

--Aaron Rodgers

Creative visualization is a powerful tool to engage your mind and body.

What you think really does dictate how you live, as is evidenced by the many Olympic athletes, celebrities and entrepreneurs who attribute their success to the power of positive thinking channeled through visualization. Just take cues from Bill Gates, Oprah Winfrey, Jim Carrey and the many professional athletes who invest time in creative visualization. It worked for them, and it can work for you too!

If you can envision yourself doing something, you can find a way to make it happen.

The trick is to learn how to defeat your inner critic, take risks, and attract the support and resources you need to succeed. Logically this requires mental focus and discipline. But you can do it if you devote time to the exploration of the 20 mental exercises in this guide.

Creative visualization empowers you to use the impressive power of your mind. Take hold of your life and explore the possibilities. You won't regret it!

###

THANK YOU AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I trust the creative visualization information and exercises presented in this publication have been educational and beneficial. I would like to commend you on your decision to live more deliberately, more joyfully, and more completely. And I would like to thank you for letting me support your efforts as you pursue a healthier, happier and more balanced lifestyle. I truly want to see you succeed and encourage you to continue your personal development journey.

I recommend the following resources as you continue your pursuit of excellence:

To learn more about other practical personal development concepts, explore my best-selling book on self-transformation, “*[This Has To Be Cheaper Than Therapy](#)*”. This publication, available on Amazon, offers wisdom to improve your life and provides a framework to achieve what you hope to accomplish. Although they are not new concepts and have been discussed in many other books before, they are a great collection of useful ideas that you should try out.

To discover other valuable personal development products, please visit the shopping page on our website, NurtureMindBodyAndSpirit.com. There you will uncover other practical products that I have developed or merchandise that I have used and highly recommend.

To receive weekly motivational tips and learn techniques designed to nurture your mind, body, and spirit, subscribe to my personal development blog: RobustCoffeeAndConversation.com.

Feel free to recommend these resources to your friends via Twitter, Facebook and other social media.

And finally, I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues and friends in the personal development field, with special acknowledgement to Robin Sharma, Tony Robbins, and Michael Hyatt. Thank you all for sharing your wisdom and for your guidance on my personal development voyage. Your encouragement and support have directed me to a richer, fuller, more meaningful life.