

## USING IMAGERY TO SHAPE YOUR FUTURE WHILE YOU ENJOY YOUR PRESENT

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Once you have learned how to settle yourself down and clear the clutter from your mind, now you are ready to instill positive models for success and enjoyment. These can be practiced in stress breaks, although the best time is other mental training sessions when you are totally alone, or when doing some activity that is essentially mindless, like riding a bus or waiting in a grocery checkout line.

Just recently we all had the thrill of watching (or even participating in) the Summer Olympic Games. Many of these athletes and coaches use mental imagery skills to guide their precision and excellence in high performance situations.<sup>6</sup> We can use these same skills to have effective, graceful, and enjoyable processes in our recreational, business, and social contexts. We can image ourselves making a great shot in golf, a wonderful presentation at work, or the feeling of a warm and affectionate hug from a family member or close friend. The more we mentally rehearse these events, the more our words become our realities, and our images become the guides for a self-fulfilling prophesy of enjoyable living.

The key is to desire a successful outcome, to mentally practice the sequence of actions to produce it, then merely allow it to play out in real life with a sense of enjoying the process while being detached about the outcome. Easier said than done, but easier done with practice using imagery.

The steps involved in constructing your optimal image are to identify what you want to have happen, then find and watch a person or model who can do it well. If the skill is a physical one, watch someone who is highly developed and also has a similar size and body type, so that the image will be biomechanically correct for your body type. Begin to see yourself doing the action, first from a distance from side and front views, and later from behind, then over your shoulder, then with the camera shooting through your eyes. Gradually mix in the sounds, touch, and kinesthetic senses, as well as smell and taste if you can. In other words, you are creating a full sensory immersion in your model of the process to be practiced. This image is to be rehearsed until all doubt disappears, and you are totally confident of doing well. Then continue practicing more after that. This is called oversimulation, when you rehearse good performance under challenging or adverse circumstances. Such rehearsal does not ensure success, but it maximizes the chances that you will be focused, consistent, and persistent in fulfilling your goals.

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