

## Fact Sheet Two: Visualisation



*"See things as you would have them be instead of as they are."*

**Robert Collier**

Visualisation, also called imagery, is a simple and natural process we already do. When we see a jacket in the shop we imagine whether it will look good on us, when we take a photo we imagine what it may look like before we see the screen, or when we remember a favourite holiday we conjure up sights, smell and sounds of the experience. **Visualisation simply involves the creation or recreation of an experience in your mind.**

It is used extensively in sport and performance circles to enhance physical preparation for an event. For example, practising a perfect golf shot before you step up to the tee. However, it is also used to improve confidence and motivation by allowing us to experience success before it has happened. This is what we are going to use it for today, we're going to "fake it until we make it".

### **How does it work?**

Well there are a few theories, actually lots of theories, and they are all a bit dry. So, I will briefly pick out the most well-supported ones and try and explain them in an interesting way.

It's been found that when you think about something, the areas of the brain that would be active when you're actually doing the task are working. This activation is even to the extent it sends messages to the associated muscle groups. Therefore, thinking about an activity results in the body rehearsing it.

Another theory is that when you mentally rehearse something, it is laying down a detailed blueprint in the brain that will build up and strengthen the mental pattern, making the skill easier to do when you actually do it. Kind of like google earthing a location before you go visit, it gives you a head start. It is believed it takes 10,000 repetitions to become an expert at a complex physical skill, so any head start you can get is an advantage.

Both these theories link into something called muscle memory which allows the body to achieve physical actions more quickly, for example tighten your abs and bum muscles or improve your running performance. It's what Giselle touts as her secret to bouncing back from her pregnancy so quickly ;)

### **How to ensure visualisation will work for you: a step-by-step guide**

Like most things, this process works best when it is comprehensive and well practised. For us today this starts by using as many senses as possible.

Usually when visualising we tend to start with the visual aspect and by adding touch, sound, smell and even taste will make it a more vivid experience. The more vivid the experience, the more powerful it will be, and thus more effective. Initially this may feel a little unusual, however you will soon be very comfortable with it. One last thing, it is your visualisation, so you can change anything you want throughout the exercise. Let's get started.

### Step-by-step guide:

1. Relax ☺. Generally, the whole process works better if you are in a relaxed frame of mind. So before you begin, try and find a quiet spot, make yourself comfy and take a few deep breaths. Maybe even put on some of your favourite, mellow tunes. You can close your eyes if you like, or keep them open, whichever feels best for you.
2. Now start to think about yourself achieving or striving towards your ultimate goal. You might find the visual image comes up first.
3. Once you have your starting point, layer in the next details.
  - If you don't already have an image, do that now. If you have an image, **flesh it out in fine detail**, i.e. what shoes are you wearing, if any, is your hair brushed, are you with anyone else?
  - **Add in any associated physical sensations** (try to get a feeling from being inside the image for a moment). Feel the ground beneath your feet, the weather on your face, the position of your body.
  - **What sounds can you hear** from yourself and the surrounding environment? Is it the crashing of waves, the sounds of kids or your puffing breath.
  - **Add in any smells**, this is often a key for people, as smell is strongly associated with memories and mood. Can you smell the beach, your deodorant, maybe even deep heat?
  - Finally, are **there any tastes**? Maybe a drink or the taste of lactic acid. Or even the taste of success ;-).

Well done. Now put it all together, breath it in, see yourself from the outside like your own film clip. Then, most importantly, jump into the moment and savour it from standing in your successful self.

Like I mentioned above the more you practise this skill, the quicker it will become, and the stronger the experience will be. Remember that visualisation is a powerful tool for your motivation, and convincing your body that success is imminent. It is important to revisit this image regularly, an excellent opportunity is when you walk to your Evolution training session, so you turn up motivated and ready to go!