STRENGTH & COURAGE

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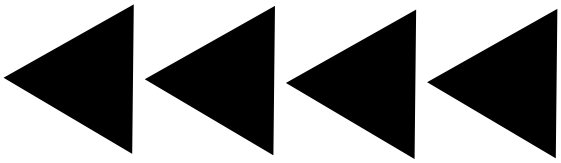
ANGELIQUE MERCURIO



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HOW TO USE STRENGTH MANTRAS

The great thing about mindfulness techniques is that they are free and accessible to you right when you need them. You don't have to buy a bottle of magic pills or an expensive trainer to capture the benefits of powerful mantras. The way the mantra is worded will give you the desired result and how frequently you use it will determine how often you feel that way. It's a formula that has pretty straight forward results.

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS YOU CAN USE MANTRAS:

- **START YOUR DAY WITH MANTRAS**

Stand in front of the mirror and summon your positivity to say the mantra out loud five times each morning when you're getting ready. Think of it as an essential part of your morning routine, just as important as putting on deodorant. Deodorant keeps your body odor at bay and mantras keep your energy from being off-putting.

- **WRITE THEM DOWN**

Write them 20 times each morning and night to bookend your days with the intention you want to set in motion. Or you can simply write the mantra on sticky-notes and place them in areas you know you will see them, such as on your computer, bathroom mirror, in front of the kitchen sink, on your car dashboard, and next to where you sleep!

- **GET CREATIVE**

Make them into a piece of art and put them up in a place in your home where you spend most of your time - like the kitchen or your bedroom. I have some things for sale if you would like.. Let me know.

- **SET REMINDERS**

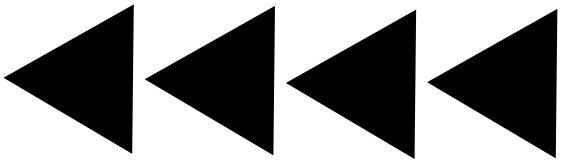
Have your phone remind you of your daily mantra throughout the day to create a new habit of thinking that will stop your old patterns. Use a simple daily calendar event reminder and set it to alert you.

- **RECITE THEM IN TIMES OF NEGATIVITY**

Try to mentally recite the mantra as often as possible when you have downtime or if you notice yourself feeling negative. You can mentally recite the mantra slowly with conviction while standing in line or out loud driving to and from work as well as when exercising.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF IT'S WORKING?

If you are diligent about using one of these mantras, you will notice an effect. You will feel stronger and more courageous. If for some reason, one of these doesn't resonate with you, no worries! You can create your own or go searching for the perfect mantra that unlocks something deep within you. You will be the determining factor on how much benefit you get from this. If you only say it once, you probably won't notice a difference. But if you say it daily in front of the mirror multiple times with enthusiasm and make it a habit…watch out world, you're going to get into a new wavelength where doors open and life feels exciting again!



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10 MANTRAS FOR STRENGTH & COURAGE

Now all you need to do is read the mantras below and see which one calls to you.

"I embrace each challenge as an opportunity to grow."
"My inner-compass guides me to make the best decisions."
"I know things will get better."
"I am supported by the Universe when I follow my heart."
"I am shielded by positive energy."
"I am ready to fulfill my soul's purpose with enthusiasm."
"Those who live courageously, guided by their spirit, never feel their life is wasted."
"The best life for me is to humbly walk the path of my soul."
"I know that each dark night is followed by a bright day."
"When I feel lost, I trust my soul is taking care of me."

POSITIVE THINKING
ANXIETY CONTROL
VISUALIZATION
GOAL SETTING
ATTENTIONAL CONTROL

- **CONTROL**

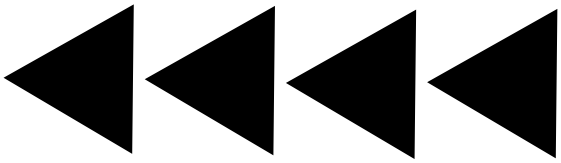
This is the extent to which you feel you are in control of your life, including your emotions and sense of life purpose. The control component can be considered your self-esteem. To be high on the Control scale means to feel comfortable in your own skin and have a good sense of who you are.

You're able to control your emotions — less likely to reveal your emotional state to others — and be less distracted by the emotions of others. To be low on the Control scale means you might feel like events happen to you and that you have no control or influence over what happens.

- **COMMITMENT**

This is the extent of your personal focus and reliability. To be high on the Commitment scale is to be able to effectively set goals and consistently achieve them, without getting distracted. A high Commitment level indicates that you're good at establishing routines and habits that cultivate success. To be low on the Commitment scale indicates that you may find it difficult to set and prioritize goals, or adapt routines or habits indicative of success. You might also be easily distracted by other people or competing priorities.

Together, the Control and Commitment scales represent the Resilience part of the Mental Toughness definition. This makes sense because the ability to bounce back from setbacks requires a sense of knowing that you are in control of your life and can make a change. It also requires focus and the ability to establish habits and targets that will get you back on track to your chosen path.



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• CHALLENGE

This is the extent to which you are driven and adaptable. To be high on the Challenge scale means that you are driven to achieve your personal best, and you see challenges, change, and adversity as opportunities rather than threats; you are likely to be flexible and agile. To be low on the Challenge scale means that you might see change as a threat, and avoid novel or challenging situations out of fear of failure.

• CONFIDENCE

This is the extent to which you believe in your ability to be productive and capable; it is your self-belief and the belief that you can influence others. To be high on the Confidence scale is to believe that you will successfully complete tasks, and to take setbacks in stride while maintaining routine and even strengthening your resolve. To be low on the Confidence scale means that you are easily unsettled by setbacks, and do not believe that you are capable or have any influence over others.

Together, the Challenge and Confidence scales represent the Confidence part of the Mental Toughness definition. This represents one's ability to identify and seize an opportunity, and to see situations as opportunities to embrace and explore. This makes sense because if you are confident in yourself and your abilities and engage easily with others, you are more likely to convert challenges into successful outcomes.

• GOAL SETTING

The ability to develop goals, actionable steps to achieve those goals, and to execute, all help to develop will-power and mental resilience. Goals can be large or small, related to physical health, emotional well-being, career, finance, spirituality, or just about anything. Goals that involve skill-acquisition will have a double benefit. For example, learning to play an instrument or learning a new language.

Some research indicates that setting and working towards goals beyond the individual, i.e. religious involvement or volunteering for a cause, can be especially useful in building resiliency. This may provide a deeper sense of purpose and connection, which can be valuable during challenging times.

• EVALUATE YOUR CORE BELIEFS

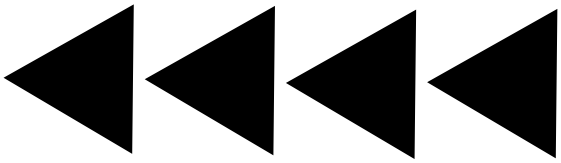
We've all developed core beliefs about ourselves, our lives and the world in general. Core beliefs develop over time and largely depend upon our past experiences. Whether you're aware of your core beliefs or not, they influence your thoughts, your behavior and emotions.

Sometimes, core beliefs are inaccurate and unproductive. For example, if you believe that you'll never succeed in life, you may be less apt to apply for new jobs -- and inadvertently, you may not present yourself well on job interviews. Therefore, your core beliefs may become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Identify and evaluate your core beliefs. Look for beliefs that are black and white, and then find exceptions to the rule. Very few things in life are "always" or "never" true. Modifying core beliefs requires purposeful intention and hard work, but it can change the entire course of your life.

• EXPEND YOUR MENTAL ENERGY WISELY

Wasting brain power ruminating about things you can't control drains mental energy quickly. The more you think about negative problems that you can't solve, the less energy you'll have leftover for creative endeavors. For example, sitting and worrying about the weather forecast isn't helpful. If a major storm is headed your way, worrying about it won't prevent it. You can, however, choose to prepare for it. Focus on what is only within your control.



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Save your mental energy for productive tasks, such as solving problems or setting goals.When your thoughts aren't productive, make a conscious effort to shift your mental energy to more helpful topics. The more you practice expending your mental energy wisely, the more it will become a habit.

- **REFLECT ON YOUR PROGRESS DAILY**

Today's busy world doesn't lend itself to making much time available for quiet reflection. Create time to reflect upon your progress toward developing mental strength. At the end of each day, ask yourself what you've learned about your thoughts, emotions and behavior. Consider what you hope to improve upon or accomplish tomorrow.

Developing mental strength is a work in progress. There is always room for improvement, and at times this will seem more difficult than at other times. Reflecting upon your progress can reinforce your ability to reach your definition of success while living according to your values.

- **CREATE GOALS.**

It's fun to aim high and dream big. But setting your sights too high will likely lead to disappointment.

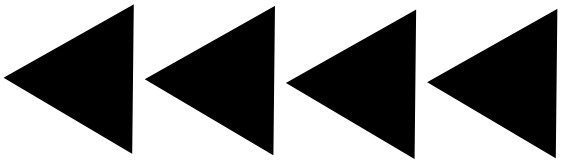
Rather than set out to lose 100 pounds, focus on losing five first. When you crush that goal, you'll be more motivated to lose the next five pounds.

Every goal you achieve gives you confidence in your own ability to be successful. This will also help you identify which goals are not challenging enough and which ones are unrealistically ambitious.

To give a broad, balanced coverage of all important areas in your life, try to set goals in some of the following categories (or in other categories of your own, where these are important to you):

Career – What level do you want to reach in your career, or what do you want to achieve?
Financial – How much do you want to earn, by what stage? How is this related to your career goals?
Education – Is there any knowledge you want to acquire in particular? What information and skills will you need to have in order to achieve other goals?
Family – Do you want to be a parent? If so, how are you going to be a good parent? How do you want to be seen by a partner or by members of your extended family?
Artistic – Do you want to achieve any artistic goals?
Attitude – Is any part of your mindset holding you back? Is there any part of the way that you behave that upsets you? (If so, set a goal to improve your behavior or find a solution to the problem.)
Physical – Are there any athletic goals that you want to achieve, or do you want good health deep into old age? What steps are you going to take to achieve this?
Pleasure – How do you want to enjoy yourself? (You should ensure that some of your life is for you!)
Public Service – Do you want to make the world a better place? If so, how?

S – Specific (or Significant).
M – Measurable (or Meaningful).
A – Attainable (or Action-Oriented).
R – Relevant (or Rewarding).
T – Time-bound (or Trackable).



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State each goal as a positive statement – Express your goals positively – "Execute this technique well" is a much better goal than "Don't make this stupid mistake."

Be precise – Set precise goals, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you'll know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.

Set priorities – When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by having too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.

Write goals down – This crystallizes them and gives them more force.

Keep operational goals small – Keep the low-level goals that you're working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward.

Set performance goals, not outcome goals – You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. It can be quite dispiriting to fail to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control!

In business, these reasons could be bad business environments or unexpected effects of government policy. In sport, they could include poor judging, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck.

If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals, and draw satisfaction from them.

Set realistic goals – It's important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (for example, employers, parents, media, or society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions.

It's also possible to set goals that are too difficult because you might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.

Example Personal Goals:
For her New Year's Resolution, Susan has decided to think about what she really wants to do with her life.

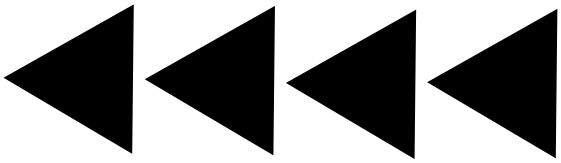
Her lifetime goals are as follows:

Career – "To be managing editor of the magazine that I work for."
Artistic – "To keep working on my illustration skills. Ultimately I want to have my own show in our downtown gallery."
Physical – "To run a marathon."

Now that Susan has listed her lifetime goals, she then breaks down each one into smaller, more manageable goals.

Let's take a closer look at how she might break down her lifetime career goal – becoming managing editor of her magazine:

Five-year goal: "Become deputy editor."
One-year goal: "Volunteer for projects that the current Managing Editor is heading up."
Six-month goal: "Go back to school and finish my journalism degree."
One-month goal: "Talk to the current managing editor to determine what skills are needed to do the job."
One-week goal: "Book the meeting with the Managing Editor."



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As you can see from this example, breaking big goals down into smaller, more manageable goals makes it far easier to see how the goal will get accomplished.

KEY POINTS

GOAL SETTING IS AN IMPORTANT METHOD FOR:

- Deciding what you want to achieve in your life.
- Separating what's important from what's irrelevant, or a distraction.
- Motivating yourself.
- Building your self-confidence, based on successful achievement of goals.
- Set your lifetime goals first. Then, set a five-year plan of smaller goals that you need to complete if you are to reach your lifetime plan. Keep the process going by regularly reviewing and updating your goals. And remember to take time to enjoy the satisfaction of achieving your goals when you do so.

If you don't already set goals, do so, starting now. As you make this technique part of your life, you'll find your career accelerating, and you'll wonder how you did without it!

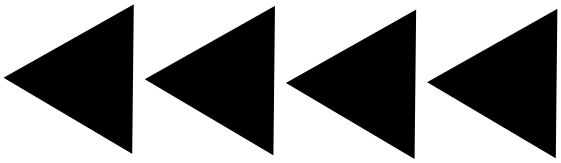
WRITE DOWN 5 GOALS YOU WANT TO DO IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

- Do at least one difficult thing each day.
- Improvement doesn't come about by accident.
- You need to challenge yourself on purpose. Make sure to analyze your own boundaries, though, since everyone has a different idea of what is challenging.
- Have the courage to pick something slightly outside these boundaries. And then take one small step every day.
- Enroll in a class you don't think you qualify for. Speak up for yourself even when it is uncomfortable. Always push yourself to become a little better today than you were yesterday.

- **BALANCE YOUR EMOTIONS WITH LOGIC.**

If you were to be 100 percent logical all the time, you might live a boring life, devoid of leisure time, pleasure, or even love. But if you base all of your decisions on emotion, you might spend all your money on fun, rather than save for retirement or investments. To make the best decisions, you need to balance your logic and emotion.



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So regardless of how minor or major the decision in your life, check yourself to make sure you are balancing your emotions with logic.

Being overly anxious, angry, or excited can cause you to make an emotional decision. So write down a list of pros and cons for each decision you make. Reviewing this list will enhance the logical part of your brain and help balance out your emotions.

- **FULFILL YOUR PURPOSE.**

It's hard to stay the course unless you know your overall purpose. Why is it that you want to hone your craft or to earn more money?

Write out a clear and concise mission statement about what you want to accomplish in life. When you're struggling to take the next step, remind yourself why it's important to keep going. Focus on your daily objectives, but make sure those steps you're taking will get you to a larger goal in the long run.

- **LEARNING FROM YOUR PAST**

Taking a look at past experiences and sources of personal strength may provide insight as to which resilience building strategies will work for you. Below are some guiding questions from the American Psychology Association, that you can ask yourself about how you've reacted to challenging situations in the past. Exploring the answers to these questions can help you develop future strategies.

Consider the following:

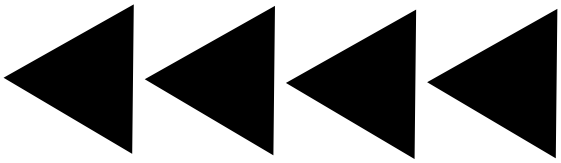
- What types of events have been most stressful for me?
- How have those events typically affected me?
- Have I found it helpful to think of important people in my life when I am distressed?
- To whom have I reached out for support in working through a traumatic or stressful experience?
- What have I learned about myself and my interactions with others during difficult times?
- Has it been helpful for me to assist someone else going through a similar experience?
- Have I been able to overcome obstacles, and if so, how?
- What has helped make me feel more hopeful about the future?

- **THINK POSITIVELY**

Self-confidence and the belief in one's ability to perform and to make decisions is one of the most important characteristics of a healthy mind. Training yourself to think optimistically and find the positive in every situation will most certainly help to build mental stamina over time.

- **USE VISUALIZATION**

Visualization is an excellent tool for managing stress, overwhelming situations, and performance anxiety. Close your eyes and imagine a time that you succeeded in a similar situation. This includes remembering the feeling that accompanied that achievement, not just the visual.



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- ## THINK LONG-TERM

Often times, we trade in long-term happiness for more immediate gratification. We can build up our confidence by making sacrifices and decisions based on long-term goals rather than short-term comforts. Finding the discipline to do so will bring greater happiness in the long-term and a higher likelihood of achieving the goals you've set for yourself.

- ## IDENTIFYING NEGATIVE THINKING

Not sure if your self-talk is positive or negative? Some common forms of negative self-talk include:

FILTERING:
You magnify the negative aspects of a situation and filter out all of the positive ones. For example, you had a great day at work. You completed your tasks ahead of time and were complimented for doing a speedy and thorough job. That evening, you focus only on your plan to do even more tasks and forget about the compliments you received.

PERSONALIZING:
When something bad occurs, you automatically blame yourself. For example, you hear that an evening out with friends is canceled, and you assume that the change in plans is because no one wanted to be around you.

CATASTROPHIZING:
You automatically anticipate the worst. The drive-through coffee shop gets your order wrong and you automatically think that the rest of your day will be a disaster. Polarizing. You see things only as either good or bad. There is no middle ground. You feel that you have to be perfect or you're a total failure..

- ## FOCUSING ON POSITIVE THINKING

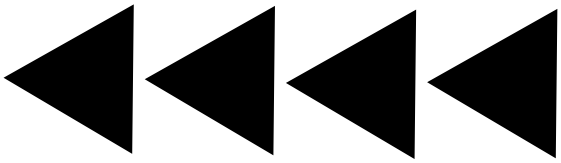
You can learn to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. The process is simple, but it does take time and practice — you're creating a new habit, after all. Here are some ways to think and behave in a more positive and optimistic way:

IDENTIFY AREAS TO CHANGE:
If you want to become more optimistic and engage in more positive thinking, first identify areas of your life that you usually think negatively about, whether it's work, your daily commute or a relationship. You can start small by focusing on one area to approach in a more positive way.

CHECK YOURSELF:
Periodically during the day, stop and evaluate what you're thinking. If you find that your thoughts are mainly negative, try to find a way to put a positive spin on them.

BE OPEN TO HUMOR:
Give yourself permission to smile or laugh, especially during difficult times. Seek humor in everyday happenings. When you can laugh at life, you feel less stressed.

FOLLOW A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE:
Aim to exercise for about 30 minutes on most days of the week. You can also break it up into 10-minute chunks of time during the day. Exercise can positively affect mood and reduce stress. Follow a healthy diet to fuel your mind and body. And learn techniques to manage stress.



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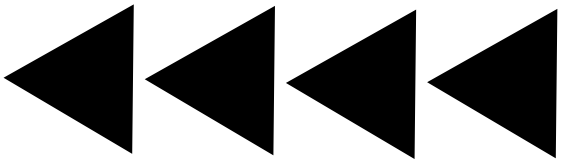
SURROUND YOURSELF WITH:
Make sure those in your life are positive, supportive people you can depend on to give helpful advice and feedback. Negative people may increase your stress level and make you doubt your ability to manage stress in healthy ways.

PRACTICE POSITIVE SELF-TALK:
Start by following one simple rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else. Be gentle and encouraging with yourself. If a negative thought enters your mind, evaluate it rationally and respond with affirmations of what is good about you. Think about things you're thankful for in your life.

Here are some examples of negative self-talk and how you can apply a positive thinking twist to them:

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK	POSITIVE THINKING
I've never done it before.	It's an opportunity to learn something new.
it's too complicated.	I'll tackle it from a different angle.
I don't have the resources.	Necessity is the mother of invention.
I'm too lazy to get this done.	I wasn't able to fit it into my schedule, but I can re-examine some priorities.
There's no way it will work.	I can try to make it work.
It's too radical a change.	Let's take a chance.
No one bothers to communicate with me.	I'll see if I can open the channels of communication.
I'm not going to get any better at this.	I'll give it another try.



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PRACTICING POSITIVE THINKING EVERY DAY

If you tend to have a negative outlook, don't expect to become an optimist overnight. But with practice, eventually your self-talk will contain less self-criticism and more self-acceptance. You may also become less critical of the world around you.

When your state of mind is generally optimistic, you're better able to handle everyday stress in a more constructive way. That ability may contribute to the widely observed health benefits of positive thinking.

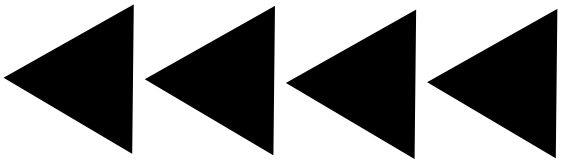
PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR THOUGHTS

One technique that will help you think more positively is to become aware of your negative "self talk" and replace negative thoughts with positive ones. Sometimes we imagine the worst in situations or about ourselves and often are unaware of the negative thoughts.

- Positive thoughts are those that make us feel good about our progress. Take time to praise yourself for the little things.
- It is important to actively think about what you are feeling and how it is portrayed in your life. Try to catch yourself thinking a negative thought, and say "STOP" to redirect yourself to positive thoughts.
- Work on replacing negative self-talk with positive words. For example, replace "I hate getting up in the morning," with "I am grateful for a new day."
- Write down negative thoughts. Carry a small pad throughout your day and jot down negative thoughts whenever you notice them.
- Evaluate relationships in your personal and work life, and surround yourself with those who are also positive and support you.
- Develop positive statements to replace negative ones using words such as happy, peaceful, loving, enthusiastic, and warm. Avoid negative words such as worried, frightened, upset, tired, bored, not, never, and can't. Remember to smile, it's contagious!

COPING STRATEGIES WHEN YOU'RE FEELING ANXIOUS OR STRESSED:

- Take a time-out. Practice yoga, listen to music, meditate, get a massage, or learn relaxation techniques. Stepping back from the problem helps clear your head.
- Eat well-balanced meals. Do not skip any meals. Do keep healthful, energy-boosting snacks on hand.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine, which can aggravate anxiety and trigger panic attacks.
- Get enough sleep. When stressed, your body needs additional sleep and rest.
- Exercise daily to help you feel good and maintain your health. Check out the fitness tips below.
- Take deep breaths. Inhale and exhale slowly.
- Count to 10 slowly. Repeat, and count to 20 if necessary.
- Do your best. Instead of aiming for perfection, which isn't possible, be proud of however close you get.
- Accept that you cannot control everything. Put your stress in perspective: Is it really as bad as you think?
- Welcome humor. A good laugh goes a long way.
- Maintain a positive attitude. Make an effort to replace negative thoughts with positive ones.
- Get involved. Volunteer or find another way to be active in your community, which creates a support network and gives you a break from everyday stress.
- Learn what triggers your anxiety. Is it work, family, school, or something else you can identify?
- Write in a journal when you're feeling stressed or anxious, and look for a pattern.



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Using **visualization techniques** to focus on your goals and desires yields four very important benefits.

1. It activates your creative subconscious which will start generating creative ideas to achieve your goal.
2. It programs your brain to more readily perceive and recognize the resources you will need to achieve your dreams.
3. It activates the law of attraction, thereby drawing into your life the people, resources, and circumstances you will need to achieve your goals.
4. It builds your internal motivation to take the necessary actions to achieve your dreams.

Visualization is really quite simple. You sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes and imagine — in as vivid detail as you can — what you would be looking at if the dream you have were already realized. Imagine being inside of yourself, looking out through your eyes at the ideal result.

Go through the following three steps:

STEP 1. Imagine sitting in a movie theater, the lights dim, and then the movie starts. It is a movie of you doing perfectly whatever it is that you want to do better. See as much detail as you can create, including your clothing, the expression on your face, small body movements, the environment and any other people that might be around. Add in any sounds you would be hearing — traffic, music, other people talking, cheering. And finally, recreate in your body any feelings you think you would be experiencing as you engage in this activity.

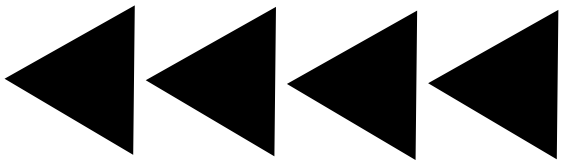
STEP 2. Get out of your chair, walk up to the screen, open a door in the screen and enter into the movie. Now experience the whole thing again from inside of yourself, looking out through your eyes. This is called an "embodied image" rather than a "distant image." It will deepen the impact of the experience. Again, see everything in vivid detail, hear the sounds you would hear, and feel the feelings you would feel.

STEP 3. Finally, walk back out of the screen that is still showing the picture of you performing perfectly, return to your seat in the theater, reach out and grab the screen and shrink it down to the size of a cracker. Then, bring this miniature screen up to your mouth, chew it up and swallow it. Imagine that each tiny piece — just like a hologram — contains the full picture of you performing well. Imagine all these little screens traveling down into your stomach and out through the bloodstream into every cell of your body. Then imagine that every cell of your body is lit up with a movie of you performing perfectly. It's like one of those appliance store windows where 50 televisions are all tuned to the same channel.

When you have finished this process — it should take less than five minutes — you can open your eyes and go about your business. If you make this part of your daily routine, you will be amazed at how much improvement you will see in your life.

CREATE GOAL PICTURES

Another powerful visualization technique is to create a photograph or picture of yourself with your goal, as if it were already completed. If one of your goals is to own a new car, take your camera down to your local auto dealer and have a picture taken of yourself sitting behind the wheel of your dream car. If your goal is to visit Paris, find a picture or poster of the Eiffel Tower and cut out a picture of yourself and place it into the picture.



STRENGTH & COURAGE

CREATE A VISUAL PICTURE AND AN AFFIRMATION FOR EACH GOAL

We recommend that you find or create a picture of every aspect of your dream life. Create a picture or a visual representation for every goal you have — financial, career, recreation, new skills and abilities, things you want to purchase, and so on.

When we were writing the very first Chicken Soup for the Soul® book, we took a copy of the New York Times best seller list, scanned it into our computer, and using the same font as the newspaper, typed Chicken Soup for the Soul into the number one position in the "Paperback Advice, How-To and Miscellaneous" category. We printed several copies and hung them up around the office. Less than two years later, our book was the number one book in that category and stayed there for over a year. Now that's a pretty solid example of a successful visualization technique!

USE AFFIRMATIONS TO SUPPORT YOUR VISUALIZATION

An affirmation is a statement that evokes not only a picture, but the experience of already having what you want. Here's an example of an affirmation:

I am happily vacationing 2 months out of the year in a tropical paradise, and working just four days a week owning my own business.

Repeating an affirmation several times a day keeps you focused on your goal, strengthens your motivation, and programs your subconscious by sending an order to your crew to do whatever it takes to make that goal happen.

Courage Affirmations

I am a risk taker.
I welcome challenges into my life.
I will face my fears head on.
Nothing will stop me from living my life.
I am a brave soul.
I have the audacity to live a bold life.
I can do anything I want in life.

Inner Strength Affirmations

I am at peace.
I am grounded.
I am calm and centered.
My life unfolds perfectly.
Everything is as it should be.

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Keeping you in a positive mindset!