

The Power of Creative Imagination

Have you ever found yourself acting out an important event like a job interview, first date, or sports game in your mind before it actually happens? Did rehearsing this event make the real thing easier? If you have ever had this experience, you know how powerful “creative imagination” can be. It allows you to work through a situation ahead of time so that you will be able to deal with it when it actually happens.

We can change our body’s responses to some things through our imaginations. An experiment with students showed that if they were asked to imagine that one hand was soaked in cold water, the temperature of the imagined soaking hand actually dropped. Danger

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triggers cause physical changes due to adrenaline release, like increased heartbeat and rapid breathing. These responses are automatic, based on the threat of danger, but the danger doesn’t have to be real for these responses to happen. They will occur even if the danger is only imagined. This is experienced with nightmares. The nightmares produce these physical changes even though the person is safely asleep in bed.

The mind can project itself into imaginary situations. Athletes practice an upcoming game in their heads before stepping onto the playing field. These mental practice sessions prepare them for the game ahead just as their real practice sessions do. In an experiment, three groups were used to compare mental practice on basketball skills. The first group practiced making shots every day for 20 days. The second group threw the ball on the first and 20th day, but did not practice in between.

Thinking Differently

The third group threw shots on the first day and then spent 20 minutes a day for the next 20 days imagining that they were throwing the ball. If they missed, they had to imagine correcting their aim. On the 21st day, the first group, which had actually practiced, improved their scores by 24%. The second group, which had not practiced, showed no improvement. But the third group, which had practiced only in their imagination, had improved their scores by 23%!



Aside from athletes, there are many others who use creative imagination. Musicians, salespeople, or actors can improve a performance by doing some mental practicing. The ability of the mind to change imagination into reality is powerful. It does take practice and concentration in order to be successful.

Choose a situation that is particularly stressful to you and use this procedure to practice a non-stressful response.

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