

Visualise this!

By James Bone

- Visualisation is a process where you create internal mental images and use this process in some positive or constructive way. For example in yoga, you may visualise a beautiful scene during relaxation to enhance relaxation of your mind; or you can visualise energy flowing up and down your spine as you breathe in and out, to enhance its free flow.
- Visualisation is a tool used quite extensively in yoga, especially in the tradition of Tantra Yoga. Tantra Yoga is a form of yoga concerned with the expansion of consciousness, and its aim is to allow yoga to be accessible to all. Visualisation is also used in many other areas such as psychology and sport.
- You can choose to be a victim of life and just meander here and there where it takes you, or you can decide to take charge and give it some direction. This is where the tool of visualisation can be very helpful. It can be used in small and simple ways, such as improving your tennis game, to actually aiding in the healing process of a serious illness.
- One theory behind the principle of visualisation is that your world is created by what you think and believe. Certainly from a scientific point of view, we know that we only see what our minds are trained and prepared to see.
- *Visualisation is a vast topic so today we will just consider 3 main areas of visualisation usage.*

• Enhancing Success

This form of Visualisation is used most readily in the areas of sport, performance, business and wealth creation. Basically you visualise in your mind's eye the positive outcome you would like to see.

- In sport for example, you may visualise yourself playing the perfect golf shot.
- In performance for example, see yourself performing the perfect dance form.
- In business for example, see your business as successful as you would like.
- In wealth creation, you see yourself achieving the goals you seek.

The process is simple, but you must be very clear in your mind what you want, or you may end up getting what you don't want!

• Healing

Martin Rossman MD was one of the first to investigate the use of visualisation in medicine and found it to enhance healing. Dean Ornish MD also used a form of visualisation in his "Reversing Heart Disease Program with Yoga".

In this process of Visualisation, you form some image in your mind, which symbolises healing for you, and the area that needs healing. This image can be quite individual, and it needs to be meaningful to be effective. Sometimes in a Yoga class or with a client I will use the image of a warm healing light spreading outward from your heart or navel to the area needing healing feeling your body immersed and nurtured by this light. For others they have used the image of their immune system successfully tackling an illness and winning. What type of technique works best for you really comes down to what feels right in your heart and can hold your concentration effortlessly.

The problem doesn't have to be major, as you can use this technique even for day to day aches and pains, injuries and coughs and colds.

• Transformation

This is the form of visualisation most used in yoga. Transformation is a process where you make a decision in your life to develop yourself in a positive and directed way. Often the process is more an uncovering of your true nature, rather than actually improving anything, as according to yoga philosophy, we and everything else is already whole and perfect, but we just can't see it. So there are a variety of techniques used to help with this process.

One such tool is the visualisation of the chakras. These are representations of your developing consciousness, which are aligned along your spinal column and brain. There is a technique called Bhuta Shudhi where you 'cleanse' the Chakras and so your consciousness through visualisation.

Visualisation is also used in Yoga Nidra, a form of deep relaxation. You use a resolution at the start and end of your practice, focussed on what you would like to transform. Visualisation is also used within the practice to draw you into deeper states.

Visualisation can also be used to enhance your flow of energy (called Prana). It assists the process by which you do physical yoga practice, such as lifting tall through the crown of your head by feeling your head as light as a balloon, or imagining drawing the energy from your feet up to the crown of your head, or feeling your feet connected to the earth, grounding like the roots of a tree.

In Contemplative Meditation, visualisation can be used to enhance a feeling, or a feature or characteristic you would like to enhance in yourself, such as focusing on the heart to enhance compassion, concentrating on a special person you admire to develop that person's qualities in yourself, focusing on a spiritual aspect you would like to develop, or visualising *on* something – for example, a mountain if you would like to be steady, or on an elephant if you would like to be strong and graceful, etc. The scope is quite unlimited, and I'm sure you can think of many more possibilities.

There are hundreds of meditation and relaxation practices using visualisation (used within the yoga and other traditions) to help direct your mind in a positive way. On the other side, visualisation is also used to loosen or dissolve negative feelings so that you can become aware of them, deal with them, and unlock your hidden potential.

- Some people can visualise extremely well and use this technique to great effect. However, not everyone has equal skill in this area. Luckily, just as the body can be trained to become stronger, so can the visualisation 'muscles' be trained to work better with practice. I myself am not strong in visualising and when I was younger I felt the practices quite frustrating and pointless. However, over time and with practice I have slowly improved my capacity to visualise. So practise, practise, practise!
- I suggest for those of you who struggle to visualise, start with something simple, such as a simple image during relaxation or meditation. Just keep saying the image to yourself, until an image begins to form. Don't try too hard and be patient, as it may take a little while to happen.
- For those who can visualise well, maybe now is the time to try one of the techniques above and see if it can enhance your life in the way you would like.
- A Simple Visualisation Technique used in Yoga to help calm the mind is a beautiful scene: Visualise a warm golden sunset, or a beautiful scene, or a lake of peace and tranquillity, or clear blue sky with a single cloud floating by,,,,, hold your mind on the visualisation... become absorbed in it... (from page 155 of "Yoga +")

Resources

- Speak to your yoga teacher
- "Yoga +" by James Bone & Radhika Randall www.yogaplustherapies.com
- "Meditations from the Tantras" by Swami Satyananda Saraswati www.satyananda.net
- "Calm the Mind – Discover inner Peace" by Shanti Gowans www.shantiyoga.com.au
- "The Hidden Power in Humans" by P S Maheshwaraananada www.yogaindailylife.com.au

- “Yoga for Athletes” by Aladar Kogler
- “Reversing Heart Disease Program with Yoga” by Dr Dean Ornish