

Resource 10: Your mind's eye

(These are extracts from *Your Mind's Eye*, by Rachel Charles)

What precisely is visualisation?

The literal meaning of the word 'visualisation' is the experiencing of visual imagery in your mind's eye. In other words, it is your ability to picture people or things that are not present, either with or without your eyes closed, an aptitude that we all have to a greater or lesser extent.

In recent decades, however, the term has developed a broader meaning, due to its connection with the human potential movement and its employment in psychotherapy. With the power of your imagination, you can change those negative, limiting beliefs you hold about yourself into positive, life-enhancing images. With practice, as your actions follow suit, your relationships will improve, you will be able to achieve your goals and you can send healing messages to your body. Equally, images received from the unconscious can give you important information about yourself and advise on the most suitable course of action. Since memories are frequently stored in the form of images rather than words, the best way to have access to all that accumulated wisdom is through metaphor and symbolism. (p5)

What if I can't visualise?

Some people are worried that no images will appear when they attempt to visualise. Such a concern may be based on a misconception that you will see an object in minute detail, just as if it were actually present. Some individuals do have this facility, but others just sense something. It doesn't matter at all how clear or faint the images are; you will be able to work with them whatever form they take. You may be one of those people who is more attuned to sound than sight and therefore inclined to receive auditory messages. Perhaps you have a keen sense of smell, taste or touch and are mostly in tune with olfactory or tactile cues. If you have a special fondness for movement or dancing, then kinaesthetic sensations are likely to be meaningful. Your experience of the imagery will be individual to yourself, and may contain several of these elements.

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It is extremely unlikely that you will be unable to receive at least a vague colour or shape. If you really do experience a complete blank, then ask yourself what might be stopping you from visualising?

Try this exercise:

Find a quiet place where you can relax, either sitting on a chair or lying down. Close your eyes, if you wish, allow extraneous thoughts to drift away, then turn your attention inwards. Bring into your mind's eye the image of a lemon. Examine it in detail. See how yellow it is. Feel the roughness and coolness of its skin. What does it smell like? Take time to evoke it. Now place it on a chopping board, take hold of a sharp knife and cut the lemon into quarters. Put the knife down and look at the texture of the segments, the shapes formed by the white pith. Now place a quarter between your lips. Imagine biting into the fruit and experience the bitter taste. Ugh!

Now gradually become aware of any physiological changes. What has happened inside your mouth? This is a simple demonstration of the power of the imagination. (p10)