



BRING YOUR MIND TO THE GAME

SPORT PSYCHOLOGY

&

MENTAL TRAINING

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TRAINING GUIDE FOR MEDITATION, VISUALIZATION, JOURNALING

MEDITATION

Meditation is essential in mental training because it allows your mind to relax, be present, and improve concentration.

Without concentration all other mental skills fail to follow through.

THE SCIENCE

Meditation increases the gray matter volume in your brain, increases long-term potentiation and cell growth which improves learning and memory. It also boosts alpha waves responsible for mental sharpness.

HOW TO MEDITATE QUICKLY

Posture

1. Sit in a quiet, comfortable environment, without any sound or distraction.
2. Keep your eyes closed, back straight, and sit crossed legged on a mat or bed.
3. Place your palms gently on your knees facing upwards.
4. Touch the tip of your index finger and thumb gently together.

Action

1. Take 10 deep breaths in through your nose deeply, relaxing your body.
2. After the last breath, start following your breath naturally.
3. Don't breathe in forcefully, let the breath happen naturally. Just observe the air.
4. If any thoughts arise, acknowledge it and bring your attention back to your breath.
5. Be kind to yourself and keep following your breathing till you are ready to get up.

Duration

1. Follow your breathing in this posture for as long as you can.
2. Keep a timer for at least 1 or 2 minutes to meditate. Gradually increase the time.
3. Meditate daily for 10 minutes with 100% concentration on your breath for best results.

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VISUALIZATION

Visualization is a mental rehearsal of your desired performance detail.

When you sit to visualize, you are able to see yourself hitting the perfect shots, winning the trophy, and celebrating your achievements.

Visualizing your success and detailed performance brings confidence, motivation, and positivity.

THE SCIENCE

Your brain cannot differentiate between a real and imagined performance. This means that the same brain networks fire when you visualize as when you perform. When you visualize a perfect skill, it strengthens the motor and pre-motor cortex areas of the brain. It stimulates visual and sensory brain systems that get you ready for your performance, and it also helps strengthen your decision-making and executive ability by activating the brain's prefrontal cortex which is the logical center of the brain. Special cells in your brain called "mirror neurons" start to fire when you visualize an action which mimics real movement and performance. Visualization helps with confidence, clarity, motivation, positivity, and skill development. It prepares you to face several tough situations because you are pre-programming your mind to act and react in confident patterns.

HOW TO VISUALIZE

1. Sit in a quiet and comfortable place. (NO MUSIC)
2. Keep your back straight and hands comfortably on your legs.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Take 10 deep breaths to relax your body.
5. Start visualizing

TYPE OF VISUALIZATION

1. **Preparation** - You can visualize preparing for your practice or your match. See yourself packing your bag, dressing up, moving towards the stadium or ground, meeting the teammates, pep-talk from the coach, stepping onto the field, doing your warm-up.



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- 2. Action** - You can visualize all your movements and actual performance whether you visualize a good practice or a match situation. See your strokes, shots, passes, dribbles, footwork, swings, hitting, running, scoring, pulling, turning - all your sport specific technical skills. Visualizing the action builds confidence in the movement and clarity of your performance.
- 3. Result** - Visualize the outcome such as perfecting your skill in a practice, receiving praise from your coach, congratulations from your teammates, parents or friends, your own victory movement or sounds you make when scoring, coming first, or winning the point. You can see the ending of the set, match, or walking to the podium and receiving the trophy or medal. You can see yourself being selected for the world championship to represent the country, you can see yourself singing the national anthem on the podium, you can see yourself returning home with a smile and medals and sleeping peacefully and getting ready for your next practice session. This is your story, make it yours.

RULES OF VISUALIZATION

- 1. Make it Positive** - You should always visualize what you want to achieve. Don't visualize mistakes, instead visualize correct movements. Don't visualize losing, instead visualize winning. If you feel your visualization is becoming negative, pause. Practice journaling and meditation to improve your focus and positivity before trying to visualize again.
- 2. Keep it Detailed** - Visualize should not be superficial and general. It should be detailed and specific. Visualize every moment of your body and the texture, shapes, and colors of the objects, equipment and environment. You may ask yourself
 - a. Where am I? (Stadium, home, gym, street)
 - i. What is the temperature, color of the sky, distance between me and others? What am I wearing? What time of day is it?
 - b. How fast or slow are my movements? Can I feel the pressure of the ball/bat/racket/shoes against my hands and feet? How are my strokes?
 - c. What muscles in my body are tense? Where is my focus? What is happening right now?



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3. **Go in Slow Motion** - Go through all the movements in slow motion. Just one service can be visualized for minutes by slowing it down, observing every movement of sliding your foot back, tossing the ball in the air, taking a short breath, moving your arm behind, and feeling the pressure of the racket on the ball, the rebound of your body, the follow through of your stroke, moving your foot forward to the next position on court, bending lower, observing the opponent. Slow everything down to see it clearly.
4. **Stay in the Present Tense** - Your visualization should always be in the present tense as if whatever you are visualizing is happening right now. Don't visualize "I see myself winning in the future." Instead visualize "I see myself crossing the finish line and I am sweating right now and looking at the screen to see my name in the first position!" Visualize as if it is happening right now.
5. **Use Multiple Senses** - We have 5 senses - what we can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. Use as many senses as you can when you visualize to make it realistic.
 - a. **Vision** - What can I see? How is my racket moving? What color jersey am I wearing? Where is the opponent standing? Where is the ball? How fast is it moving?
 - b. **Audio** - What sounds can I hear? Swing of the bat in the air? Smack of the ball? Wiping powder on my palms? Sound of my jacket zipping up? What is the coach saying? Sound of the whistle? Crowd shouting? Teammates saying something? Sound of my breath?
 - c. **Touch** - Feel the tension in your grip, the surface of the ball, the fine hairs on the tennis ball, the creases in the cricket bat, the wetness of swimming goggles, the gloves grip of a goalkeeper, the touch of the grass, handshakes, high-fives, feeling your feet on the ground.
 - d. **Smell** - What can you smell? The grass? Equipment? Mustiness of the stadium? Smell of new shoes? You know your sport.
 - e. **Taste** - A sip of water between rallies, an energy bar? Taste of your favorite food at your victory celebration party? Use as many senses as you can. It is not compulsory to always use smell and taste as they can be few.
6. **Feel the Emotions** - Don't run through your visualization mechanically. Feel every emotion. Feel excited of excelling your stroke in practice, feel confident of being prepared before the competition, feel happy winning the medal, feel proud of achieving your goals, feel content of being selected onto the next round. Always end your visualization on a high note.



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PERSPECTIVES OF VISUALIZATION

1. **FIRST PERSON** - In this perspective, you are in the driver's seat. You can't see your entire body but you see everything around you like the equipment, field, and everything else in your field of vision, like your normal vision.
2. **THIRD PERSON** - In this perspective, you visualize as if you are in the audience. You see yourself in the third-person performing movements and winning situations.

Note: First-person visualizations are more powerful as they are more realistic.



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JOURNALLING

Have you ever faced a lot of negative thoughts? Been unable to stop overthinking? Journaling is the right place to beat irrational, negative thoughts.

When you are unable to concentrate in meditation or think positively in visualization, you need to clear the clutter. If you have low self-belief or constantly criticize yourself and worry a lot, you need to write down and rationalize your fears first before meditating or visualizing.

JOURNALING FOR CONFIDENCE

The simplest form of journaling is to boost confidence. You simply have to make a list of your strengths in detail.

THE SCIENCE

When we overthink and have a lot of negative thoughts, the amygdala in the brain is overactive. The amygdala is the fear center of the brain. This leads to what is called a "Negative Bias".

Our brain becomes over-sensitive to negative information about ourselves and the world and seems to ignore positive qualities or events, further increasing the fear.

When we have an unrealistic view of our abilities and preparation, it can lower our confidence.

WHAT TO DO

Make a list of your strengths. Write down the answers to the following questions. Don't just think about it, write it down:

1. What are my technical strengths in my game? (Write 5 minimum, 20 maximum.)
 - i. Examples - My speed, power, strength, footwork, backhand, forehand, cover drive, etc. (Please be specific)
 - ii. Why is it a strength? What is special in my skill?
 - iii. Do other people have this skill? Why is my skill different and better than other people I know?



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2. What are my physical strengths in my game? (Write 3 minimum)
 - i. Examples - My speed, stamina, fitness, power, muscle strength, flexibility, endurance.
 - ii. What is special about my physical strength that is better than other people that I know?
3. What are my mental strengths or positive personality traits? (Write 4 minimum)
 - i. Examples - "I never give up", my discipline, fighting spirit, "I always listen to my coach", I don't get easily distracted, I am positive, I have a helping nature, friendly, "I know how to get back." Etc.
 - ii. Why is this a special skill?
 - iii. Why am I proud of it?

WHAT TO DO NEXT

1. Read your list to yourself. How do you feel reading the list?
2. Keep adding strengths to your list every day or every couple of days.
3. Read your list of strengths as part of your warm up before an important match or even your practice to feel confident and be aware of your strengths.

ALL THE BEST!