

VISUALIZATION

The last couple of "tips" by Dr. Mike Keyes dealt with stress and relaxation as a tool to overcome stress. Now that we are relaxed, let's look at some powerful mental techniques to improve our performance. I refer to these as "Strategic Visualization" and "Tactical Visualization". These techniques work on the principles that the subconscious mind controls such activities as shooting (or should and would if you let it!) and that our neural pathways can be "primed" to transmit preferred messages to the body. Also, it is known that the subconscious mind holds our "self-image" and cannot tell a *vividly* imagined event from a real one (!) With these ideas firmly in place, we can devise a strategy to improve our self image. And, once we have a new self image, we are compelled to adhere to it! Building a new self-image is done with:

Strategic visualization. The technique is so easy many can't believe there isn't more to it. What you do, is make up an "affirmation" card: a 3X5 card with a positive, present tense, first person statement on it. (Don't skip over this part - all of the last sentence is critical to success.) An example would be: "I am a 570 air pistol shooter". (Of course, this should be a challenging but not ridiculous statement and one that represents a significant improvement.) Now, using the relaxation techniques we have learned, we get comfortable and relaxed, take out your card(s) and then read this statement to ourselves - once out loud and once silently. Then, we close our eyes and visualize - IN AS MUCH DETAIL (color, sound, smells, etc.) as we can - being a 570 shooter. See the scoreboard in your mind with your name and score. Visualize shooting the match with 95 average strings. Feel your friends pat your back, etc. Do this several times a day. That's it. And, believe it or not, in a far shorter time than you might think possible, you will find yourself doing the things necessary to be a 570 shooter and then the day will come that the 570 score is achieved and you'll hardly even be surprised - after all that is YOU, so what's the big deal? You will find that instead of turning on the TV, you think you'll practice a while, because that is what 570 shooters DO. You'll be sure your equipment is suitable for a 570 shooter. All this will happen without conscious effort, just because you WANT to! You can make up several of these statements and even *subordinate* statements. For example, with the "I am a 570 shooter" statement, you might feel that you just can't find enough training time to make this happen, so you make a card that says, "I find it easy to schedule training time" and put in behind the "570" statement and use it the same way. Very soon you will be finding reasons to GO practice rather than reasons NOT to go. The subconscious mind has received all those vivid pictures of the "new you", believes they are actual experiences and is making sure you conform to this new, improved self image. The more frequently you visualize, the quicker the change occurs.

Tactical visualization is a bit different. In Tip #7 we talked about creating a perfect model of the action you wish to take - in this case, a perfectly executed shot. You must have this in order to practice your skill either mentally or physically. Researchers have shown that if an athlete, a down-hill skier in one example, visualizes making a slalom run while hooked up to a myograph, minute electrical fields are measured that indicate the exact same muscles are being activated that would be used to actually ski the slope. We believe that these neural "paths" can be programmed with the visualization of your perfect "model" just as with actual action. Visualization is probably better because the act can be done perfectly EVERY time! So, this is a way of training mentally anywhere, anytime. One excellent use of tactical imaging is to visualize a perfect shot on the range just before you actually perform the shot. Then, letting your mind hold that image, you raise the gun and execute what you have just visualized. The results of this technique are very gratifying!

And, notice that if you are working hard at visualizing perfect executions, you are not worrying about negative things and are going to be free of the stress-causing concerns that plagued you before!

Don

[Back to Notes](#)