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Visualization sparked my career and energized my life. When I was just starting out, someone recommended I read Claude Bristol's book *TNT: The Power Within You*. The book sparked such an intensity of energy and profound new awareness that I couldn't get a good night's sleep for almost a week. Even now, as I thumb through the book and recall that turning point in my life, a shiver runs up my spine.

This book followed his ground-breaking book, *The Magic of Believing*. These books came from his experience as a journalist studying and reporting on spiritual and religious

movements, building his own wealth and career as an investment banker, and his study of thousands of books on "the science of thought." Research in neuroscience, emotional intelligence, and positive psychology are now validating and refining these findings.

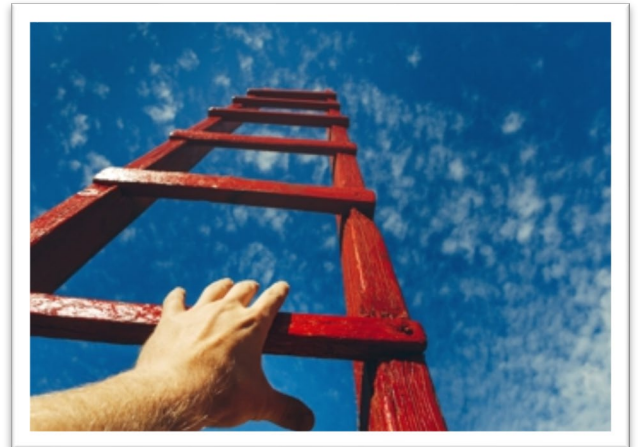
Here are just a few of the many key passages from *TNT* that started my juices flowing (the emphasis shown is his):

"Picture the force! It is the explosive force of a mental picture of what you want in life, given by you to your subconscious... Whatever you picture, within reason, can come true in your life *if* you have sufficient faith in the power within! That's your TNT - a mental picture of what you want and the faith that you can and will get it... we do not think in words. We think in pictures! The universal language is *feeling* ... this creative power operates like a magnet. Give it a strong, clear picture of what you want and this creative power starts to work magnetizing conditions about you -- attracting to you the things, resources, opportunities, circumstances and even the people you need, to help bring to pass in your outer life what you have pictured! ... what you picture in your mind, if you picture it clearly and confidently and persistently enough, will eventually come to pass in your life... there is a universal law in the mental realm, 'like attracts like.'"

TNT awakened me to the enormous -- unused -- power between my ears. I read countless books and articles on these topics and I attended presentations and workshops given by leading authors, trainers, and speakers. I listened to dozens of audiotapes on this and related "mental attitude" topics.

Over the next few years, I used these approaches to build a highly successful sales and management career, quit smoking, lose weight and get into better physical shape, develop my writing and speaking skills, write bestselling books, and build two international training and consulting firms.

My personal visioning files are full of career dreaming, periodic assessments of strengths and successes, affirmations, mission/purpose statements, inspirational quotes, and visualizations.



Later these merged with the notes from yearly visioning and progress reviews Heather and I began to do when our kids were toddlers -- we were drifting apart and seemed to be heading down separate paths. Using a five-year time horizon, these notes describe our ideal life in seven areas; our family, careers, financial, community, spiritual, and social lives.

It's eerie (and inspiring) to look back at all these notes and their accuracy in "foretelling the future." Never mind all the research, studies, and expert opinion on imagery and visualization. Here's all the proof I need that regularly and continually picturing our preferred future works.

When he was creative director at Walt Disney Studios, Mike Vance said *"soon after the completion of Disney World someone said, 'Isn't it too bad Walt Disney didn't live to see this.' I replied, 'He did see it -- that's why it's here.'"*

This issue is dedicated to the most powerful renewable energy source I've ever experienced; visualization and imagery. We naturally picture our future. And often that's not a good thing. Picture yourself picturing your *preferred positive future*. Dream on.

See It to Be It: Visualizing Your Ideal Future

Decades of research has proven the power of visualization in athletics, health, and personal, team, or organizational effectiveness. We become what we think about.

The following is an exercise I've used personally, with my wife, Heather, and many groups. Recently, I led a group of high potential leaders through this guided imagery process as part of their focus on work/life balance.

Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. See that big movie screen in the middle of your forehead. Picture yourself in a very familiar home. See yourself walking from room to room, counting the windows in the house. Feel the carpet or floor on your bare feet.

Now imagine that there is a party or family gathering in the house with many of your favorite people. Hear the happy sounds of laughter, voices, maybe music, and the noisy clamor. Feel the energy of the party or festive atmosphere pervading the house. Take a deep breath and smell the delicious aromas of your favorite foods wafting through the house. Imagine you're taking a bite of that mouth-watering food. Visualize its texture and temperature as you chew. Savor the taste as you swallow.

Now see yourself heading out the front door of the house. Out in the yard or street is a big old-fashioned hot air balloon tethered to the ground. Its gas burners are blasting hot air as the balloon pulls at the ropes to escape into the air. You step into the antique gondola hanging from the balloon. On the floor, you notice a brass counter with the numbers of the current year on it. You reach down and click the counter ahead to the year you'd like to take your time-traveling balloon to. The balloon lifts off rapidly,



leaving the house and its setting disappearing rapidly below. The balloon begins to move forward very rapidly. It picks up speed rapidly as colors rush by and the wind whistles through the gondola. Suddenly, the balloon stops. It's a beautiful summer day. The sun is warmly caressing your shoulders and neck as you look down upon your future workplace. It's exactly what you'd love it to be.

What do you see? What conversations are you hearing? Who do you see? What's your role and responsibilities? What leadership are you providing?

Your balloon drifts over your home. It's ideal. What do you see? Who's there? What are the positive conversations about?

Now your balloon drifts off and over your favorite recreational setting. Where is that? You look down and see yourself sitting with a loved one or a very close friend. You overhear a reflective and very fulfilling conversation. You're talking about how the past few years have really come together.

What would the conversation include? You describe how your career, home life, family, social life, community involvement, financial picture, and spiritual life have blossomed. What does this ideal picture look like?

The clearer you picture your ideal future, the stronger you'll set your magnetic field to pull you there.

Thoughts That Make You Go Hmmm on...Visualization

"That we are drawn by the future rather than just driven by the past is extremely important and directly contrary to the heritage of social science and the history of psychology. It is, nevertheless, a basic and implicit premise of positive psychology."

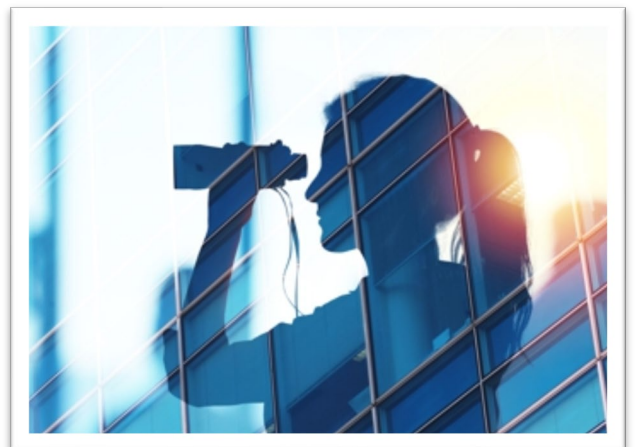
-- Martin Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*

"When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge."

-- Albert Einstein

"Another simple way to boost your positivity is to dream more frequently about your future. Conjure up the best possible outcomes for yourself. Visualize your future successes in great detail. People who are assigned at random to carry out such an exercise show reliable increases in their positivity relative to those who carry out more mundane self-reflections."

-- Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity: Groundbreaking Research Reveals How to Embrace the Hidden Strength of Positive Emotions*



"Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your ideal is the prophecy of what you shall, at last, unveil... dreams are the seedlings of realities."

-- James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*

"Your body speaks imagery. Imagery is the language that will lodge the vision deep within the core of your being, so that it pulls you, day after day, relentlessly toward itself. Seeing yourself on a daily basis making a difference, getting in touch with your goals, achieving and celebrating milestones brings precision to the day-to-day process of incorporating vision into your world."

-- Peter Jensen, *The Inside Edge: High Performance Through Mental Fitness*

"Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone, you may still exist, but you have ceased to live."

-- Mark Twain

"Nurturing a fantasy is the first step in the neural process of achieving success in the world. It begins with creative imagination, a process that takes place in the frontal lobe, the area in your brain that has the unrelenting capacity to dream up virtually anything. If you can't imagine a specific goal, you won't make it to second base, which is figuring out how to make your dream come true."

-- Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman, *How God Changes our Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*

"See yourself and what you see, you will become."

-- Aristotle

"Within the parameters of physical possibilities, you receive what you 'want with your whole soul' -- whether inner truth, a personal accomplishment, relationships, whatever it is. Excluding some great countervailing force, and for either ill or good, the one thing that you want above all else is what you get...the true yearnings of our soul are not only the best predictor of where we'll go in life, but the primary means of getting us there."

-- Mitch Horowitz, *One Simple Idea: How Positive Thinking Reshaped Modern Life*

"No one has yet computed how many imaginary triumphs are silently celebrated by people each year to keep up their courage."

-- Athenaeus, Greek rhetorician, and grammarian

Tips and Techniques to Harness the Power of Visualization

Visualization energizes our dreams -- the more vivid our visualization, the higher our energy and magnetic attraction.

Neuroscience shows we're hardwired to look for what's wrong. If our ancient ancestors missed catching lunch, they'd keep trying for dinner. If they missed that rustling in the bush, they became lunch.

We have a natural ability to image what we don't want and then bring it into being. Reversing years of negative conditioning and bad habits so we can learn to vividly see what we do want isn't easy. Most of us have to work very hard at it.



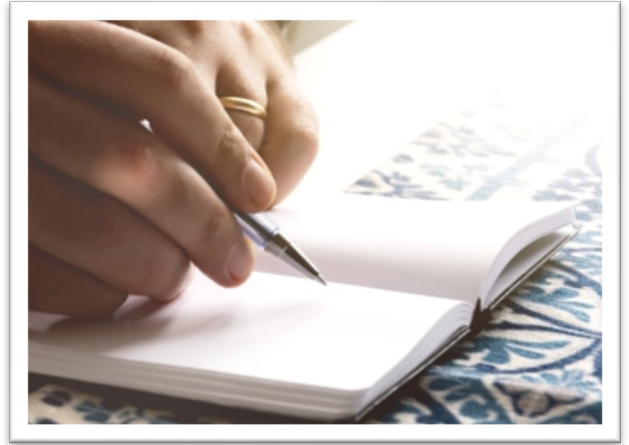
Since we're all different, there is no universal "one approach fits all" way to increase your picturing power. Here are a few approaches to developing this critical skill:

- Imagery often works best in a quiet, relaxed place at our peak time of day (e.g., a morning person or night owl).
- At least once a year, [describe what your ideal life](#) would look like if things were going extremely well in five years from now. Outline your perfect job. Envision your ideal family life. See yourself helping to build whatever communities you're now part of. Visualize a strong and secure financial situation. Imagine your preferred social circle. Feel an even stronger connection to your philosophical or spiritual beliefs. See your optimum health or physical condition.
- If you have a spouse or "significant other," do the above visioning exercise together at least once per year.
- Counteract the "inner boo bird" feeding your mind a steady stream of negative, fear-filled images with a continual stream of positive images of your preferred outcomes. Use visualization or imagery to picture yourself successfully giving a presentation, confronting an issue, reaching an agreement, or mastering whatever you might be anxious about doing.
- Begin with the end in mind. As you start a big task, bring about a major personal change, or embark on a long project, continually visualize your success. Surround yourself with images, symbols, pictures, positive reinforcement, encouraging people, uplifting messages, and the like.
- If you find you tend to carry past mistakes forward or sometimes doubt your abilities, keep a list of successful work projects, events, or activities. When you're about to give a new presentation, start a project, or take on a challenging new task, review your success list and relive the times you mastered similar work. Charge your personal magnetic field with positive energy and feelings of success.
- Only share your vision with people who truly want to see you succeed and will encourage or help you get there. However, share, broadcast, brag, take bets toward, or otherwise publicly declare your improvement goals. That paints you into a corner. Your pride will push you to keep going toward that goal when you've got to pull yourself out of bed early, pass on the dessert, or practice those new skills.

Picturing my preferred future has been my greatest source of energy and focus. I've used this approach for specific situations, long term projects, and making vital life choices and decisions.

5 Ways to Keep Growing and Energizing Your Dreams

I've been studying and applying the power of positive pictures for most of my life. These skills, habits, and techniques are often called visioning, imagery, and visualization. They have a power for change, improvement, and energy creation that we're only beginning to understand.



It's hard to picture a positive, hopeful future if we're not positive and confident about ourselves. It's hard to see ourselves taking control of our destiny, developing an effective team, or leading a highly successful organization if we don't feel good about our own development, success, and skills.

When I began to give paid keynote speeches and presentations, I'd review a list of past speeches and presentations where I especially connected and was "in flow with the audience." I would relive and recapture the emotional electricity in those rooms. I'd then carry these feelings into visualization for this group and see a highly successful "in flow" presentation to them.

Here are R & R (reflection and renewal) approaches I've found very helpful:

- Take a "bliss break" by making a list of all the little things that "give you a thrill." It's a fun exercise (the list can run to many pages once you get started). Indulge yourself in activities on your list.
- Wrap up your day just before going to bed by recounting your top five accomplishments or best things that happened that day. This is especially important when you've had a bad day. Fall asleep feeling good about yourself and your situation.
- Schedule regular reflection time. Review your vision, values, and purpose. Read inspirational material. Meditate (many helpful apps are available. I use Insight Timer). Focus on life's bigger issues and put today's concerns into a broader context.
- Keep a personal journal daily to reflect on and record your deepest thoughts. This can be especially useful if you're going through a tough period and you don't have someone or a group of close people that you can talk with. Periodically look back through your journal entries to review and assess your progress.
- Ensure that your day planner and calendar reflect your values. Schedule personal and professional activities that align with your values with equal weight. Don't allow today's urgencies to crowd out what's really important in your life.

Forming the habit of picturing our preferred future has enormous payback in effectiveness and well-being. In his pioneering book, [TNT: The Power Within You](#), that blasted me into a totally new mindset, Claude Bristol writes, "Whatever you need to fit into the pattern of achievement that you have pictured, will be attracted to you by the power within if you persist in your visualizing, day after day, and put forth every effort in support of your heartfelt desire."

Tweet Reading: Recommended Online Articles



This section summarizes last month's LinkedIn Updates and Twitter Tweets about online articles or blog posts that I've flagged as worth reading. These are usually posted on weekends when I am doing much of my reading for research, learning, or leisure. You can follow me on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/JimClemmer>

My original tweet commenting on the article follows each title and descriptor from the original source:

A practical application of positive psychology research based on leveraging character strengths.

[What is Your Best Possible Self?](#), Ryan Niemiec, *Psychology Today*

"This exercise, called Best Possible Self, by researchers and practitioners, is one of the stronger happiness exercises because it has good research support."

Research on the power of visualization and three steps to increase its effectiveness.

[The Neuroscience of Visualization](#), Amy Palmer, *Mind Movies*

"The brain has the same activity when it visualizes doing an action as it does when it is physically performing the action."

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The items in each month's issue of *The Leader Letter* are first published in my weekly [blog](#) during the previous month.

If you read each blog post (or issue of *The Leader Letter*) as it's published over twelve months, you'll have read the equivalent of a leadership book. And you'll pick up a few practical leadership tips that help you use time more strategically and tame your E-Beast!

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