

# FAQ

## Visualization Quick Start

### How do visualizations work? What makes them useful?

Visualizations embed new memories in your subconscious, helping your mind believe that you've already succeeded at the task ahead of you. The more you repeat a visualization, the more "wins" you rack up, so when you get to the actual event, your mind believes you really have been-there-done-that.

As you strengthen these neural pathways, it gets easier for your brain to recall the expected feelings, thoughts, and behaviors — and to work to repeat those sensations when you're actually delivering your talk.

### What research supports this?

A wide range of research supports this, from Cognitive Behavioral Theory to Hebbian Learning to Expectancy Theory and more. *(Query ChatGPT for specifics on "What's the science behind mental rehearsal and visualizations?")*

### What are the four steps to designing a visualization?

**STEP 1:** Decide how you want to be at the **end** of your talk or presentation. Happy? Excited? Proud? See yourself basking in the moment. You did it!

**STEP 2:** Decide how you want to be at the **beginning** of your talk or presentation. Ready? Confident? "On?" Lock in those sensations now.

**STEP 3:** Choose 2-3 key points during the **middle** of your talk or presentation, those moments on which everything turns. What feelings describe you now?

**STEP 4:** Play with some **challenges** you might face or things that could go wrong during your talk or presentation. Working through them now makes it much easier if and when disruptions happen. You'll know you've got this!

At each step, be as vivid in your feelings and actions as you can be. This isn't a time to practice your talk, but rather to rehearse the way you want to feel and act at these moments in your speech or presentation. This will pay massive dividends when you're actually delivering your talk.



## Isn't this like affirmations?

No, visualizations are very different from affirmations. It's not just pictures v. words, it's a matter of experiencing a story you create about something you really want v. trying to convince yourself that you've got what it takes to succeed. Visualizations are built on feelings and intentions, while affirmations are built on hope.

Affirmations do work for some people, but I know from two separate, determined efforts, that they didn't work for me. But visualizations? A game-changer every time.

## What if my mind starts doubting all this?

As you develop and repeat your visualization, watch for moments when doubt or anxiety creep in. It's normal to have those intrusions, but you don't have to include them in your visualization. If you try to ignore them, they'll hang around, so dismiss them with thoughts like, "Not now" or "You have no place here" or even just "This is *\*my\** visualization, so get lost." You also don't need permission to include whatever you like in your visualization. It's *your* "movie" — design it exactly as you'd like.

## Any other suggestions?

- 1) It helps to do some of your repetitions standing up, as it grounds or anchors you as being in control when you're in the spotlight (figurative or literal). And add some movement as well, to get those sensations into your body.
- 2) Picture how you'll be the morning of the event, then an hour before, then five minutes before. And thank your body for gathering the energy needed to help you succeed.

## How else can I create a visualization?

Having a hard time creating a visualization? Try building a **Vision Board** — a collection of photos or illustrations that capture how you'll feel at key points along the way. Be sure to label the **sensations** you'll experience as you connect with each of those images.

If this idea appeals to you, put it together in whatever way you like, then run through it enough times for the images to be burned into your brain. Be sure to include each of the four key steps as you put together your Vision Board.



# Sample Visualization

## • Debrief •

- ▶ The most significant thing you might have noticed is that I did this in first-person and present tense. That makes it easier to *feel* the sensations and emotions, to be a part of the scenario, rather than “watching” it.
- ▶ This followed all four steps laid out in the Visualizations section of the video — the desired goal, how you start it, key points along the way, and handling unplanned moments. The steps are listed in order of importance, but they were put into a chronological form for the audio, so you could better observe the flow. I added context and detail to the time before the meeting itself, just to help me really get my head into the moment.
- ▶ You might have noticed the word “prepared” several times. That’s because preparation is the second most important thing, after getting your mindset dialed in.
- ▶ This could have been longer than 4 minutes, if I had added details about my office or the board room or the light filtering through the waiting area. AND, you can make it shorter if you need to. Flexibility is key here. The one thing you should do, in the final minutes before you start, is replay the last segment in your mind, where you finish your speech or presentation. You want to have the sense that you’ve already won — before you begin!
- ▶ I created this by just talking into my phone, and then transcribing it. That gives a more conversational feel, and made it easier to refine it to just what I needed. Don’t worry about memorizing your visualization, just go through the major points, focusing on how you’re feeling in each moment. You may find, as you repeat your visualization, that it morphs or evolves, and that’s great — you’ll be experiencing it from multiple angles.
- ▶ This format can be adapted to any situation where you’re speaking in front of others — at a conference, on a panel, doing a dissertation defense, speaking up during team meetings, pitching investors, interviewing for a job, or even asking for a date. The only one who needs to hear your visualization is you, so be as rich in detail and confident in approach as you can. The only obstacles you face in your visualization are the ones you create.

