

# The Science Behind The Power Of The Mind

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Would you believe me if I told you that by simply visualizing yourself performing a physical activity, you would improve your skill by nearly as much as if you had actively participated in the activity? That by using visualization, you could improve your health?



Well, believe it or not, it's a fact!

In the article, [If You Can Believe it, You Can Achieve it! Visualization: Master Tool to Create Change](#), I talked about how I used **visualization** as one of the tools that helped me regain my health. It's such a powerful tool, that I'd like to further expand upon the concept.

## The Science

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I can't tell you how often I hear, "What's the science behind that?" or "Where's the proof?" especially regarding anything holistic or about the human mind. And I'd have to say for many years, I was only about "the science" as well.

However these days I have learned through experience that in many cases, just because "science" hasn't confirmed this or that doesn't mean that it isn't real. In many cases, there isn't a viable

way to study certain things. For decades this was the case with proving that acupuncture meridians really do exist. Though now that we have some proof still doesn't negate the thousands of years of study, mapping, and successful health outcomes by treating imbalances in the **meridian systems** (Now referred to as the [Primo Vascular System](#)).

So will the positive effects of visualization fall under the same skeptic denial despite the anecdotal results?

Happily, this is no longer the case regarding visualization! Because if its studies you need, then studies we got!

Published in *The British Journal of Psychology* there was a study conducted by Dr. Alan Richardson, Australian Psychologist, some 30 years ago that is sometimes referred to as the **famous basketball experiment**.

Firstly, I have to admit that actual information about *this particular* study is a bit difficult to find, though third-party reports can be found everywhere on the internet. However, it's still worth discussing because it did spark much interest regarding the power of mental visualization as a tool for increased physical performance. But before we dig into some of the latest research, let's first briefly talk about Alan Richardson's study.

Here's what he did.

He split a group of individuals into three groups and recorded how many free throws each group could make.

- The first group was then instructed to practice free throws every day for one hour.
- The second group was instructed to simply visualize themselves making the free throw shots.
- The third group was told to do nothing.

After thirty days, the three groups were tested again.

The first group, not surprisingly, improved by 24%. The third group who were told to do nothing did not improve at all, and that also was not surprising. But check this out, the second group improved by 23%! That's just 1% less than the first group! Imagine that!

**And remember that the second group, unlike the first group, never even picked up a basketball with the only difference being the power of the mind through visualization!**

No wonder it sparked so much interest!

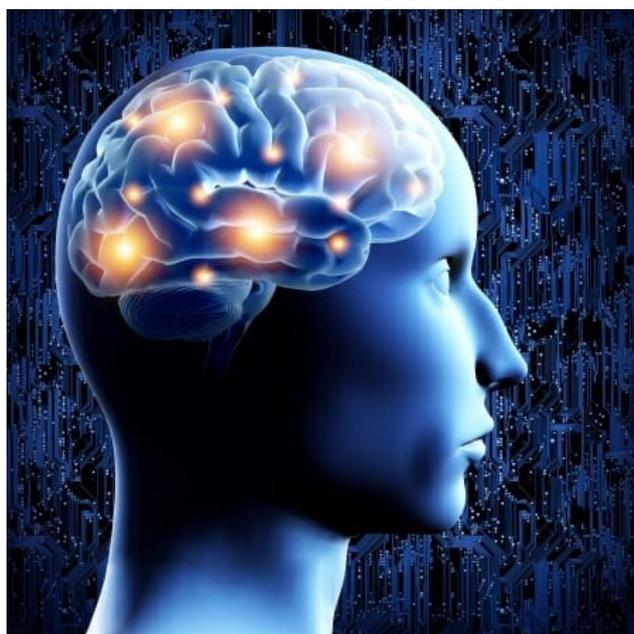
Now I'm not implying that visualization should be a substitute for moving and practicing physical skills. After all, we always need to keep our bodies moving. In fact, the best results are achieved by doing both, imagining the best physical performance and actually practicing the physical skill. And this was proven in a 2016 study published in the *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*. They concluded,

*...training programs could be adjusted and adapted to include mental imagery in addition to physical practice, which may reduce the likelihood of overuse injuries, physiological stress and overtraining, while still proving sufficient to stimulate strength increases. Coaches, educators, athletes, sport psychologists, and therapists are strongly advised to practice/perform and persist with their mental imagery plans with physical training routines to maximize gains and minimize the disuse-induced loss in muscle strength.*

But what if, like in my case, when moving the body is difficult and the only thing available is visualization? Is possible that by simply imagining the best possible outcome, whatever it is... can you really achieve it?

The answer lies in the **mind-brain connection**.

Simply, in many ways, the brain cannot tell the difference between what is real and what is imagined. When the subconscious mind repeatedly processes the same message it begins to accept it, and subsequently your mindset changes to one that is in accordance with the message that has been replaying over and over again. How do we know this? Because this is something that can be observed within the brain.



A 2015 study published in the *Journal of Trends in Cognitive Sciences* found that,

*Specifically, mental images seem to behave much like weak versions of externally triggered perceptual representations. Functional brain imaging work supports the behavioral evidence by demonstrating that common sets of neural structures are employed during both events. Further, both representations seem to be encoded using a common set of basic visual features, which in many visual areas are organized topographically.*

Another study looking at the brain patterns in weightlifters revealed that the patterns in the brain that were activated when the weightlifter engaged in lifting hundreds of pounds were **also activated when the weightlifter only imagined lifting**.

*We conclude that the mental training employed by this study enhances the cortical output signal, which drives the muscles to a higher activation level and increases strength.*

This means that research is now proving that mental practices are nearly as effective as the actual physical application! Isn't this just more proof of the effectiveness of the placebo and the power of the mind?

Further research shows that visualization can

- Improve mental and physical skills
- Increase creativity
- Increase motivation
- Increase self-confidence
- Reduce anxiety and fear

And all of this leads to the ability to master new skills and achieve the goals you have set for yourself.

## Putting Visualization Into Action

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This activity takes time and practice, so be patient with yourself. Also, remember, that it is your imagination, so put zero limitations on yourself. In other words, **GO FOR IT!** However, in the beginning, it is best to take small steps and then before you know it, you will be running marathons!

**Step One:** Establish a physical activity goal. At first, it should be an activity that, realistically, you should be able to do over time. However, **DO NOT** do the actual physical activity yet. It may be as simple or as complicated as you like, just as long as you clearly define it. You must visualize EVERY DETAIL – that's the key. For an example of what I did using visualization to regain my health, please refer [HERE](#).

**Step Two:** Visualize yourself practicing this activity and once again, the more details the better. Visualize the details, each and every one. Here are some questions to help you:

- Can you visualize each step or movement in your chosen physical activity?
- Can you see yourself performing the task?
- Visualize your immediate surroundings, what does it look like? What is the temperature?
- Are you alone or are with others? If there are others, do they play a role in your goal?
- What do you see, hear, feel, and smell?
- How does your body feel? Are you sweating?
- What emotions are you experiencing?

**Step Three:** Hold onto this mental image. If doubts should come into view, release them!

**Step Four:** Visualize yourself achieving the goal. Visualize your desired outcome as if it has **already happened!**

And lastly, here are a few more questions to ponder.

1. If visualization can lead to improved physical and mental performance, doesn't it only make sense that this technique should apply to healing the body and mind as well? What are your thoughts about this?
2. Regarding self-healing, if the subconscious is continuously receiving the message that we are healing ourselves isn't it logical that cellular changes will begin to take place? Do you think that this could lead to actual healing as imagined?
3. How do you think this relates to the Placebo/Nocebo effect? Remember that the placebo effect refers to a positive health outcome whereas the nocebo effect refers to a negative health outcome.



It is important that you continue to believe, even when the going gets tough. Remember, if you don't believe in yourself, and your ability to learn new skills and achieve goals, then no one else will either. I remember when I was regaining my health, there certainly was no shortage of the naysayers. So it is vital to keep in mind if someone finds it necessary to diminish your intentions and objectives, it is *their* problem. Not yours!

**Your belief is a whole lot more powerful than their negativity!**

I'd love to hear your thoughts, questions, and comments below!

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**About the author:**

Dr. Michelle Kmiec is a board-certified chiropractic physician who also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Biology, and a minor in Medical Research. She is a life-long athlete who after curing herself 100% naturally from MS and chronic anxiety, became an avid nutrition health researcher/promoter.



She has been featured in many Health magazines and has been a guest on radio talk shows in the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia. She is the author of the book "Healthcare Freedom Revolution: Exposing the Lies, Deceit and Greed of the Medical Profession", Founder of Online Holistic Health, and a contributing writer for other popular informative health website/blogs. She is also co-founder of Crazy Meets Common Sense! – the Podcast that makes sense out of the crazy, to help you live a more healthy, fulfilling and empowering life!