

## Visualise to Improve Your Exam Performance

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### Steps for you to think about

**Relax and set your intention**

**Survey to activate your brain**

**Note the four main sections**

**Question former knowledge**

**Now read to better understand**

**Highlight key-words or phrases**

**Extract words for mapping**

### Self-image Psychology

We behave according to the person we know ourselves to be – that is the ideas, attitudes, beliefs, habits, values and self-images we hold about ourselves. Much of these self-images are subconscious (not aware of) and their job is to maintain and regulate our behaviour. If we have unhelpful ideas about how good we are, and we do better than we know our self to be, our subconscious will correct for the mistake of doing well by engaging us in limiting thinking and behaviour to bring us back to what is 'normal' for us. So our academic potential may be much higher, but we will operate from a belief level which is the most dominant self-images in our mind.

### Success Programming

To improve academic performance we must deliberately program our self-images to a higher performance level before we are there yet. This will engage our subconscious to work for us towards our 'new higher-performing normal'.

This is where visualisation is useful. Just as airline pilots use simulators to mentally rehearse high-pressure problem scenarios so that they may perform effectively if that scenario is to occur, similarly, students can mentally simulate (rehearse in their mind) situations in the exam room so they can perform well under pressure. It works because two-thirds of our brain activity is the same, whether it is mentally rehearsed through visualisation or actually practiced in reality. Our brain does not know the difference – it wires in the desired response. For a peak exam performance, students should do both visual and real practice.

### Overcoming Anxiety

The problem is that students who are new to exams feel anxious because they are out of their comfort zone. They do not get enough real practice in the exam room to program their ideal response in their mind – calm, relaxed, confident and so on. So visualisation is a great way they can program a positive response ahead of time.

### Visualising Exams

To visualise your ideal scene, spend some time writing an exam visualisation script. This is a 'story' of how you want to see yourself in the exam room, what you want to say to yourself (positive affirmations) and how you want to feel. For example: the pressure is on. You are sitting in the exam room. Your friends are sitting around you. The examiner calls to begin. You flip open the exam booklet and begin reading the questions. You smile to yourself and feel great because you can see that your preparation will pay off. You feel calm. You know that everything you need to score well in this exam is eager to come out and you can recall it with ease....

When you have written your script, record yourself reading it so that you may listen to it repeatedly prior to exams. Through repetition, you programme your brain to create a new normal for you, so that when you come to do the exam in reality, your conditioned response flows naturally. Some positive affirmation statements could be.

*'I am clear, calm and confident in the exam'. 'All the information is coming to me now'. 'This exam is going to be my best yet'.*

Use statements like this to help you visualise (picture and feel) yourself giving your absolute ideal exam performance. If rehearsed many times before the exam, you will be amazed at the impact it has on the day.