**Hearing the Vision: Mental Imagery in Hypnotherapy and Religious Experience**

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**The meaning of the term VISION**

1. Physical Perception - “Pilots need perfect vision.”
2. Mental Picture-Internal images and visualizations Shakespeare’s “In my mind’s eye, Horatio.” (Hamlet)
3. Future aspiration- “Walt Disney’s vision was to establish a theme park in California and later Florida.” Very popular in business and political discourse.

The brain uses virtually the same neural regions to generate mental images as it does to produce “real” images of what one actually sees. Cognitive neuroscience has provided ample evidence that from the brain’s perspective there is relatively little difference between physically sensing something (i.e. seeing, hearing, smelling etc.) and mentally simulating the same sensation.

Physical sight and internal “mind’s eye” vision compete in that they cannot occur at the same time. Physical sight can cancel out or weaken mental imagery. For this reason, sustained internal vision can more easily take place if one’s physical perceptions are dimmed (Dark room, close your eyes.) or altogether suspended (e.g., in a dream state or altered states of consciousness, like hypnosis.).

Shelley Taylor in an article for *American Psychologist* the academic journal for the American Psychological Association entitled “Harnessing the Imagination” asserted “of the many skills that humans possess, one of the most intriguing **is the process by which we envision the future** and **then regulate our behavior and emotions so as to bring it about.”**

**The Applications of Vision in the Social Sciences and Sport**

Vision in Psychology- Guided Imagery (Controlled Daydreaming) with individuals or groups. Example: Desensitization treatment of phobias.

Transportation theory: Listening to or reading a story can be an immersive experience making them feel as if they were experiencing the events themselves.

**Vision and Performance in Sport-Studies have found that imagery is effective promoting athletic achievement.** As a result, many elite athletes around the world utilize some sort of imagery enhancement technique during their training.

Allan Paivio uses a model that has two central dimensions: ***cognitive*** and ***motivational*. Cognitive** involves imagery for mental rehearsal (Like putting in golf.). **Motivational** involvesbigger picture goals, thereby helping keep the athlete’s commitment at a high level (Such as visualizing winning a gold medal at the Olympics.). The imagery involved might include both recalling peak achievements or past success (e.g. beating a formidable competitor) or alternatively, forming creative images about a successful future performance.

Finally, the most astonishing impact of imagery in sport is the fact that not only can visualization improve the precision of certain skills, but **it can also contribute to actual muscle gain!**

**The neuroscientific basis of this remarkable finding is that by going through a training routine mentally, many of the same brain circuits will be activated-and thus strengthened and fine-tuned-as if one participated in the activity with one’s physical body; the brain signals, in turn, drive the muscles to a higher activation level and thus increase their strength. (Robertson, *The Mind’s Eye*, 203;Ranganathan et al., “From Mental Power to Muscle Power,”944.)**

**According to a recent review by Slimani and his colleagues,laboratory studies have consistently evidenced measurable strength gainas a result of mental imagery. (Slimani et al.,”Effects of Mental Imagery on Muscular Strength,”434.)**

**For example, in a 12 week training program (15 minutes per day,5 days per week), consisting purely of visualization without performing any physical exerciss, a 13.5% muscle strength increase was observed, a similar study lasting for 6 weeks the gain was 10.8%! (Yao et al., “Kinesthetic Imagery Training,” 1.)**

**In one study (Lebon,Collet,and Guillot, “Motor Imagery Training,”1680) two groups were asked to do regular bench press and leg press exercises, but when they took a break from the physical exercise, one of the groups was instructed to carry on the task mentally (while physically resting). The extra mental exercise was shown to have paid off in added strength, indicating that can be intensified by utilizing physical rest periods for mental practice.**

***Perhaps even more importantly, other studies showed that mental training can also take place when an athlete would be prevented from physical training because of a sports injury.***

For example, in one study, two groups of healthy participants underwent wrist-hand immobilization-they were fitted with a rigid cast extending from just below the elbow past the fingers-to induce a temporary weakness in their wrist. Over a period of four weeks in the cast, as expected, a 45% loss of strength occurred, but significantly, **in those subjects who regularly exercised their wrists MENTALLY, the loss of strength was reduced by as much as 50%** (Clark et al., “Power of the Mind,”; **similar results were obtained** by Meugnot and Agbangla, “Motor Imagery Practice,”496).This means that **injured athletes** who temporarily cannot participate in a conventional fitness program can still improve their motor functions through engaging with mental practice.

In Judeo-Christian Scripture, the NRSV translation of the Bible contains over 100 occurrences of the word “vision” and these refer to some form of mental imagery. David Aune explains that **Hebrew and Aramaic terms for “vision” are also “auditions” (auditory experiences). Starting in Genesis 15:1 “the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision,” Genesis 46: “God spoke to Israel in a vision at night”. The Lord’s word is reported to have come “in a vision to several prophet (e.g. Amos 1:1, Obadiah1:1, Nahum 1:1.) God’s communication with King David is reported as “Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one” Psalm 89:19.**

**In the Bible, often you *HEAR* a Vision. Sound becomes sight! Remember the movie Jurassic Park? You hear the T-Rex long before you see the T-Rex. By the time you see it, it is too late.**

**O.T. Genesis 1 :3 And God *SAID, “Let there be light” and there was light.***

**N.T. Acts 2::2 Suddenly *a sound* came from heavenlike the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.**

**N.T. John 1: 1 “In the beginning was the WORD, vs 14 And the WORD became flesh and dwelt among us,”**

**Martin Luther King *spoke* into the microphone in Washington D.C. and said,**

***“I have a dream”*** *and* the nation ***heard*** his dream, is vision for America!

Sometimes it is **both vision and hearing**, Moses burning bush then he heard the vision of God to tell Pharoah to let my people go. Exodus 3: 2-10.

**Hearing is the first function of the leader, counselor, therapist, minister**.

A hearing heart, WE Hear the INVISIBLE! The Word, the sound becomes FLESH!

Listen closely to a vision from the Christian scholar and author C.S. Lewis “You and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness.” WHAT a Vision from the author of ***The Chronicles of Narnia*** , as well as the ***The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe*** and ***Mere Christianity.***

In hypnotherapy we are allowed to listen to the inner world of our clients and invited to Guide, Suggest, Share, Create and HEAR their VISIONS of Health, Healing and Achievement!