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Students – Reprogram Your Mind to Be a Better Learner

By Royane Real

Do you feel as if learning new things in school or at work is hard for you? A lack of confidence will actually make new learning even harder! Here is a way to use visualization to help you improve your learning.

If you want to become a good student, it's important to have confidence in yourself as a learner. It's important to believe that you actually like learning, and it's important to believe that you really enjoy the topic you are studying.

Why? When you think that you're not a good learner, you may let yourself get defeated before you start. When you tell yourself that you don't understand a subject, that it's too hard, and it's not very interesting, you won't let your brain get excited about learning the material.

You can actually reprogram your mind to improve your learning success by changing your attitude and beliefs.

By pretending to yourself that you do understand the subject matter, and that you find it incredibly interesting, you set up the conditions within your mind to make this a reality.

Successful visualization essentially means that you are able to pretend to yourself that you are already performing successfully the skill you want to learn.

You can use the technique of visualization to change your messages to yourself about what kind of student you are. You can create new messages for yourself saying that learning is easy and fun for you.

Practice your new, imagined state of learning confidence frequently, until it becomes a part of you.

To make the messages sink in even more deeply, put yourself into a very relaxed state of body and mind. To achieve this state, sit or lie comfortably in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Notice your breathing.

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Relax your body and focus your attention on your breath. Start to breathe freely and deeply, in a relaxed manner. You can also use different meditation techniques to get your mind into a more relaxed state where it will be easier to accept a new, positive message.

Take a few messages to picture yourself as a learner. Take note of what you see in your mind.

When visualizing, some people see still images, as in a photograph, while others see live action all around them. For some people, the images are two-dimensional and faint, while for others, the images are three dimensional and solid. For different people the images may appear as black and white, transparent, or colored.

Your visualization may seem to unfold on a screen like a movie, or you may see yourself acting in a play on stage with seemingly real people. You may be watching an image of yourself in action, or you

may feel as if you are actually inside your own body, looking out through your eyes, watching the action around you and participating in it.

If you are visualizing either past or future scenarios in a way that drains away your self-confidence, you can use special techniques derived from Neuro-Linguistic Programming that will lessen their hold on you.

Are your visualizations of yourself positive or negative?

When a negative scenario plays itself out in your mind, notice how it appears. Does the scene appear in black and white, or is it in color? Is it near or far? Does it seem to be on a screen, or is it three dimensional? Are there voices? Are they threatening? Humiliating? How do you appear in the scene—are you large, or small? Do you seem powerful? Or weak?

Once you are familiar with the details of your negative imaginings, become the director of your own inner movie. If you are seeing a negative experience in color, change it to black and white, or make it transparent. If the negative image is close, make it go far away.

If the negative image is three-dimensional, make it two-dimensional. If there are voices you don't want to hear, make them quiet, or turn them into funny cartoon voices that sound silly.

Play circus music in the background to drown out the words of people you don't want to hear. If other people in your scenes seem very threatening to you, shrink them in size or make them into cartoon characters. Imagine yourself growing very, very large and solid, much bigger than the people who have been putting you down.

If you have been reliving an unpleasant scene as if you are actually participating in it with the action all around you, change it so it takes place on a screen that you are viewing from a distance. That way it will have less emotional impact on you. Bleach out the colors, or turn them to black and white. Turn down the sound. Then make the screen smaller and mentally whoosh it away.

Now, replace the visualizations that you don't want with visualizations that you do want. Imagine scenes of yourself being happy, relaxed and confident. See yourself learning easily, understanding deeply, getting excellent marks on your tests.

Strongly feel within yourself the satisfaction, confidence, and pride you would have. See it, feel it, right now, in the present, as a part of you.

Feel that you really understand the subject matter and that you absolutely love learning more about it. Pretend to yourself that it is one of your favorite subjects to learn about.

When you have imagined yourself in a scene that fills you with positive confidence, you can view it on a screen, or imagine yourself right in the middle of the scene, taking place all around you. Intensify the colors, and your positive feelings.

Or just close your eyes and feel within yourself how much you enjoy this subject, and how much you enjoy how smart you are.

Anytime you have a few minutes, recreate these positive imagined scenes. Do this as many times a day as you can, until you always think of yourself as a smart, capable learner.

This article is written by learning expert Royane Real. If you want to learn more ways to improve your brain performance and creativity, get her new book "How You Can Be Smarter Use Your Brain to Learn Faster, Remember Better, and Be More Creative" Download it today at

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Do You Know How Your Students Want To Learn?

By Brenda Townsend Hall

Learner power is the topic of this article. I wonder how many school directors think about asking their students how they want to learn. The idea of conducting a needs analysis to find out what students want to learn is nothing new, but I'm not sure if we are quite so used to trying to find out their preferred learning styles. I mention this because it strikes me that so many teachers come from the same mould, having qualified through courses based very much on progressive western views of educational practice. Typically, these teachers want lots of classroom activity, learner participation and have a view of the teacher as a facilitator rather than pedagogue. On the other hand, the students will probably feel comfortable if the teaching style is in keeping with what they are used to.

I can remember my own astonishment when teaching a group of 30 students in a French university

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only to discover that they didn't expect to be involved in activities that required them to actually speak.

They were used to being passive receptacles of information which they would record and then work on using reading and writing as the means of learning. Of course, I wanted to change all that but I realized that I could only introduce change by finding out what they expected, what they wanted and by negotiating with them possible better ways of effective language learning.

It seems to me that we should conduct regular surveys of students to find out their views about how they think the classroom should be managed, what types of materials should be used and how they should be used, how work should be organized, what activities should be done in class, how the teacher should interact with students. The information gathered can be useful to teachers whose own ideas might be quite different. Once they know students' preferences they will be able to judge more clearly which aspects of their teaching style to modify and which aspects to try to introduce incrementally so as not to deter students.

Brenda Townsend Hall, a contributing editor to *ESLEmployment*, is a writer in the fields of English for business, cross-cultural awareness and business communications. Interested in receiving TEFL job listings weekly for free? To learn more visit

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