

## CHAPTER 6 – Visualization

Visualization is a mental strategy employed by nearly all world class athletes and professionals in all walks of life. What is visualization? By definition, visualization is a mental image that is similar to a visual perception. So what does that mean? Well, I look at it in two distinct forms. One is a technique that consists of creating a mental image of a desired outcome, and repeatedly playing that image in the mind. Or, you may think of it as a technique of relaxation, whereby images that invoke a relaxed state are visualized, such as a pond or other serene scenarios.

That sounds pretty technical doesn't it? How does it relate to the game of poker? Well, I'll get to that in due time. Let's continue to explore this tool in the meantime shall we? A great Olympic athlete recently stated that she had visualized the final sprint to the finish line in her mind many times before she ever arrived at the Olympics in which she competed. She believes that doing this gave her an advantage over her competition because she had already played the outcome in her mind and had seen herself winning the race. Do you think this can help you at the poker table?

Let's think about this some more. In psychology circles, visualization is also referred to as guided imagery, or the process of creating a scene in the mind of what a person wants to happen. In sports, an athlete will create images, like pictures or movies, that recreate his best performances, or he will envision a desired outcome. While imagining these scenarios, the athlete actually imagines every detail and the way it feels to perform just the way he wants. These images can be visual or auditory. Using the mind, an athlete can call up these images over and over, enhancing his skill through repetition or rehearsal, similar to physical practice. With mental rehearsal, minds and bodies become trained to actually perform the skill imagined.

This same can hold true for poker players. A player may look down at his hole cards and before the hand plays out, can begin to play out scenarios in his mind. For instance, he may think about how to react to a raise, whether he may want to bluff or what he will do if he flops the nuts. By playing out these scenarios, a player is able to anticipate rather than react and maintain a solid poker face when he is particularly strong. This can be used in tournaments as well. With the size of today's tournaments, plying in such huge fields against hundreds or even thousands of players can be a daunting task. If a player thinks about the entire field he may be beaten before it starts. So you need to break things down in your mind. Think about one table and visualize yourself making the final table. Take it a step further. Visualize yourself playing better starting hands and what hands you should be ready to get involved with. If you take these factors into account, you no longer will be living in the moment. Exciting moments will no longer catch you off guard and you will be prepared for anything that comes your way.

There is a darker side of course. A player can also visualize bad things happening. I wouldn't suggest doing this too often. Just every once in a while to prepare yourself for a potential bad beat to avoid tilt is ok, but don't dwell on it. If you focus on the bad, then bad things will happen.

Both physical and psychological reactions in certain situations can be improved with such visualization. Such repeated imagery can build both experience and confidence in an player's ability to perform certain skills under pressure, and in a variety of possible situations. The most effective visualization techniques result in a very vivid experience in which the player has complete control over a successful performance.

Guided imagery and visualization can maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of an player's game. In a world where performance and success is measured and the average and superior player's differences are minute, most players will use every possible training technique at hand. Visualization is used by many to gain that very slim margin and make them rise to the top.

**REMEMBER:** Go to [www.sportingbetusa.com](http://www.sportingbetusa.com), download the poker software where you can play for fun or for real! Put in practice what you have learned. Good Luck!