

CHAPTER 9

Process Visualisation

*I never hit a shot, not even in practice, without having
a very sharp, in-focus picture of it in my head.*

– Jack Nicklaus, golfer

Process visualisation is a cognitive technique that helps to make any task, process or skill easier, faster and better. It involves mentally rehearsing the steps involved in performing an activity with precision, using all your senses to create a vivid and detailed picture of yourself in action. By doing so, you activate and strengthen the neural pathways involved in the actual execution of the task, which reinforces what's known as a 'positive performance pattern'. Stanford University researcher Karl Pribram called this mental rehearsal the creation of 'mental holograms'. These are 3D images that direct nerve pulses to all the muscles in the body that will be involved in the actual execution of the task.

Lee Pulos, an acclaimed sports psychologist and personal inspiration of mine, used process visualisation when he worked with the Canadian women's national volleyball team. One of the players was working on making a particular shot better. It was good, but she wanted to make it excellent. He guided her to visualise the movement and perfect execution of the shot again and again – from the feel of the ball to the sound it would make when she hit it, to where she wanted it to go, to the position of her body. In a relaxed state, she did this hundreds of times until the mental rehearsal was so vivid and established that, when she started practising the shot on court, her mind and body became one. The result was a nearly

flawless execution. She mastered it in her mind and then translated it into physical action.

Process visualisation is useful for improving any skill, from public speaking to performing complex surgeries. And when combined with physical practice, it gives you a substantial edge. The key difference between outcome visualisation (focusing on the goal) and process visualisation is that here, the focus is on *how* you will perform each movement or task. I am going to teach you the exact way to do this.

PERFORMING LIKE THE TOP 1 PER CENT

Process visualisation is the number-one tool for consistent and optimal performance. Sometimes, when we hear the word ‘performance’, we think it’s only for elite athletes or actors. And, generally, a lot of the examples are. That’s because we haven’t been taught how to apply it to other areas and it’s always been a tool the elite have had access to. Performance has so much breadth to it, though. In its simplest form, it is how you do an action or task. We are performing hundreds of these every day and can improve a lot of them. Think about it: you perform when you’re in a meeting at work, delivering a presentation, making an important sales call, or even when you’re cooking dinner for your family. You perform when you’re executing a complex task like a root canal or negotiating a contract. Even going to the gym is a performance! It’s all about how well you carry out that action. The reason I love process visualisation is because you can apply it to literally any skill: technical skills, soft skills, hard skills and leadership skills. Mentally rehearsing the action helps you build confidence, improves physical coordination and accuracy, accelerates reaction times and ultimately enhances your craft. As we explored in [Chapter 1](#), your body cooperates with your thoughts and images when you send a clear message, so you can improve your performance without actually engaging in the physical activity.

I want you to think about a task, activity or event you want to perform well in – for example, presenting at a meeting, singing in a show or passing your driving test. Repeat the visualisation below at least five times before doing it.

PERFORMING LIKE THE TOP 1 PER CENT VISUALISATION (3–6 MINUTES)

Recommended track: 'Experience' by Ludovico Einaudi

1. **Prepare:** Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Move your body to release tension, take five deep breaths and a moment of stillness.
2. **Create the environment:** Place yourself in the environment you will be in when you are performing the chosen task. Are you inside? Outside? What can you see? Who else is there?
3. **Perform:** Mentally rehearse yourself performing the task in the exact way you want to. For example, running, playing the piano, having a conversation, going to the gym, hosting a dinner, serving aces in a tennis game and so on. What does an optimal performance look like? Focus on your movement, pace, accuracy and consistency.
4. **Go deeper:** What part of your body is most intensely involved in performing the activity? What are your hands doing? Are your feet or legs involved? Go as detailed as feeling it in your muscles. Tune into the sensations in your body.
5. **Add details:** What other details are there? Is there anyone watching? Who do you see? Are there other objects involved? For example, a mic? A ball? A slide deck? Hear the sounds and the noises.
6. **Add emotion:** How do you feel performing the activity? In flow? Focused? Energised? It doesn't have to be anything too intense.
7. **1 per cent better:** What does performing 1 per cent better look like? What changes? How do you carry out the action now? Push yourself.
8. **Repeat:** Keep repeating the performance until your mind gets into a flow state with it. See it from the first and third person, repeating the performance the exact way you want it to go.
9. **Close with confidence:** After the mental rehearsal feels established and it feels effortless, take five more deep breaths, a moment of stillness and gently open your eyes.

You can also add physical movements when you do this. For example, there are brilliant videos of Formula One drivers George Russell and Carlos Sainz Jr holding their steering wheels in their hands while visualising. It makes it more real for the mind and body. Last month, I worked with a group of dentists. As I guided the visualisation, some of them held the equipment in their hand. This helped them to find even more clarity in the visualisation.

Using your best performance as a blueprint

Another variation of this visualisation is to recall your best performances. Ask yourself, what are the six to eight actions or things you do when you are performing at your best? For example, if you are a runner, you might think of your fastest or longest run. In that run, what was your form like? What was your pace like? How did your body feel? What was your state of mind? If you are a performer, you might use your best acting scene or show. Again, think about the particular things you did that made it exceptional – your hand gestures, your body state, your interactions. In your visualisation, you want to mentally rehearse that performance again and again, seeing yourself achieve the same standard and result. When you make this your normal, you can level up your overall performance.

Taking this one step further, I want to introduce you to one of my favourite performance tactics that can be combined with the last visualisation. It's called the T-CUP formula, which stands for 'Thinking Correctly Under Pressure', and was created by renowned England rugby coach Sir Clive Woodward. The formula is a combination of three words that acts as both a mental anchor and a trigger, enabling you to access a state of high performance and focus instantly. This is especially useful in high pressure or stressful situations. For example, Michael Phelps uses 'Breathe, Visualise, Execute', Serena Williams uses 'Anchor, Zone In, Attack' and mine is: 'Smile, Visualise, Dominate'. Repeating your own T-CUP formula conditions your mind so strongly that, over time, the mere suggestion of the words to your brain will replay the visualisation, similar to how Pavlov's dogs salivated when the bell rang. This is why you often see tennis players sitting in their chair between games with their eyes closed, repeating certain words. You can prime your brain in those 60 seconds, and it can have an immediate impact on your performance.

How to Create Your T-CUP Formula:

1. **Reflect on what you need most under pressure.** Do you need calm? Precision? Energy? Bravery?
2. **Choose three clear, actionable words.** These should evoke the state you want to embody. Write them somewhere so you remember them!
3. **Practise during visualisation sessions.** Repeat your T-CUP formula as you mentally rehearse achieving your goals.

Apply this same thinking to the way you perform in your personal and professional life. Just before a sales call, use your T-CUP formula. Just before you go on stage, repeat it. This only works if you have done the visualisation and T-CUP formula enough times for your brain to recognise the association.

OVERCOMING PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

If you are someone who struggles with performance anxiety, I would strongly urge you to make process visualisation a part of your routine. Performance anxiety is a natural and common human experience that can affect many people. Even the best performers, athletes and leaders in the world struggle with it. Often referred to as stage fright, this is a type of nervousness that occurs when you have to perform in any capacity. It might be in front of people, on TV, at a sporting event, reading in class or giving a presentation. It's more than a few nerves; it's when the fear of performing becomes too consuming that it negatively impacts your performance. This type of anxiety tends to come from a previous experience you have either had or observed. It can also be a result of low self-esteem and belief. When the pressure is on, it's all too easy to get worked up. We doubt ourselves, we lose our energy, we rush, we overprepare and we overthink. No matter how good you are at something, if you can't mentally handle the pressure, your performance will suffer.

One of my clients is the Chief Marketing Officer of a global company. She is one of the most competent and confident people I have met. Yet, put her on a podcast in front of a few cameras and her performance suffers majorly. This was harming her reputation and progress. In our sessions, I started by guiding her through visualisations where she was speaking on a

podcast or in a public environment. At first the process felt uncomfortable, mirroring the anxiety she experienced in real life. This showed me how deep it ran. It was important not to rush this stage. Instead, we took our time to explore the root cause of her discomfort, gradually helping her feel more neutral in the visualisations.

As we progressed, the next step was to move beyond just neutralising the anxiety to actually improving her performance. We mentally rehearsed podcast episodes over and over. In these visualisations, she focused on maintaining a calm, confident energy while delivering impressive answers with ease. Once she was able to consistently picture herself in this empowered state, we began to introduce positive emotions, such as having fun with the conversation and feeling proud of her performance.

This is a great example of how mental rehearsal can help you unwire certain beliefs, rewire new behaviours and then see excellent results. What had started as a major source of anxiety became an opportunity for her to shine. Now, she's a regular on podcasts, and she can't get enough of them! Think of it like this: she could have pushed herself to go on 50 podcasts and would eventually overcome some of the anxiety. But instead, by mentally rehearsing it 50 times, her mind learned she could actually perform well and feel comfortable in the situation. We made her better at the process in her mind before doing it in reality.

Take a moment to think about a certain situation or task you do in your work or life that brings about performance anxiety. For example, one of my friends recently came to me because she was nervous about a conversation she needed to have with her boss about asking for a raise. Consider how you, too, can use a process visualisation to help you complete the task better.

Improving public speaking

When I was young, I used to be an average public speaker. I wasn't too bad at it, but I definitely didn't enjoy it. I would get consumed by nerves beforehand, didn't know how to handle much pressure and would often choke on my words because of it. Oh, and I can't forget the sweaty palms. Today, I am one of the top public speakers in my field globally, have given two TEDx Talks, spoken on over one hundred stages in front of thousands of people and consistently get exceptional results while having so much fun

doing it. I'm not saying this to brag; I'm saying this because visualisation is the reason I was able to improve my skills and standard so significantly. And it continues to be the reason I can keep getting better. If I can do it, so can you. I approach public speaking like an athlete preparing for a big game. My goal is to feel confident, deliver with impact and make my talks memorable. Peak performance requires peak mental preparation. That's why 70 per cent of my preparation involves visualisation.

Let me take you through my exact routine:

1. **Prepare:** I find a comfortable position, close my eyes, move my body to release any tension, take five deep breaths and a moment of stillness.
2. **Create the environment:** I start by creating the environment I will be speaking in. I add the shapes, colours, stage and audience seats. If I don't know what it will look like, I create a general sense of a room.
3. **Locate myself:** What am I wearing? Where am I standing before walking on? Naturally, I will start to feel a little nervous, but, as I am in a visualisation, I can intentionally train my body into how I want to feel in that moment. I choose an energised calm.
4. **Mentally rehearse walking on:** I then watch myself walking on stage with confidence. I see myself smiling and take a pause before starting. (I used to rush and start as quickly as possible. This signalled nerves. Now, I have trained myself to act differently, and it shows more authority.)
5. **Mentally rehearse the speech:** Then, I mentally rehearse the rest of my performance on stage. I hear the words I will say. I listen to the tone and projection of my voice. I visualise my hands moving as I speak; I continue to see myself moving across the stage smoothly. I mentally rehearse how I want to engage with the audience.
6. **Add emotion:** I ask myself how I want to feel on stage as I perform. I start to embody more confidence and power. I also see myself giving off a warm energy.
7. **Multiple perspectives:** I visualise the experience from my perspective (first-person) and from the audience's point of view (third-person), gaining a full sense of the performance.
8. **Repeat:** I keep visualising the process again and again until it feels very effortless for my mind.
9. **Close with readiness:** I take five more deep breaths, a moment of stillness and gently open my eyes.

Last month, I delivered a keynote to 800 people at a global conference. Starting two weeks before the event, I spent 5 minutes a day mentally rehearsing my performance. Not only does it help me to improve and get better each time, but I am in total flow on stage and my nerves don't

consume me. We don't think about the outcome when we are in flow. The mind becomes quiet, tension leaves the body and the performance feels effortless. So many people I speak to either have a fear of public speaking or want to get much better at it. It's a skill that can accelerate your career and life in so many ways. In fact, a lot of C-suites and leaders come to me with this exact problem. They have to speak at big events, but crumble under pressure or don't perform the way they want to. One of my clients is the CEO of a global company. He is often on TV or speaking in front of audiences, but finds it extremely difficult to perform without feeling nervous or stressed, and doesn't have much time to prepare. I have been teaching him this exact process and, last week, I had the chance to watch one of his live speeches. He was sensational. I spoke to him after, and he told me it was the best he had performed on stage and what surprised him most was that he enjoyed it. This was something we worked on in his mental rehearsal. Instead of hating each second, we trained his mind and body to learn how to enjoy it more. Research by cognitive psychologist Sian Beilock, author of *Choke*, supports this. Her studies show that mental rehearsal can mitigate the negative effects of anxiety on performance. By visualising a speech or presentation before the actual event, you create a sense of familiarity for both your brain and body, helping you perform more confidently under pressure.

This technique isn't just for high-profile speakers or performers. I once received an email from someone who attended one of my live workshops on mental fitness. They said they had been using the visualisation recording specifically for speaking up more at work. They would visualise asking questions, standing up for themselves and sharing ideas during meetings. Their email explained that, a few weeks later, so many people had noticed a significant change in their confidence and articulacy in meetings. In another example, I met someone who had a huge fear of public speaking. The thought of going on stage made her feel sick. She made it her goal to visualise herself on stage multiple times, performing the way she wanted to. She practised for ten minutes every day. Four weeks later, she DM'd me telling me she had done five presentations at work and even performed on two stages for spoken word events.

So, wherever you are starting – whether you are at school, regularly pitching to your team or a well-known performer/speaker – try the

visualisation a couple of times beforehand and notice the difference it makes.

INCREASING FOCUS AND PRODUCTIVITY

According to Gloria Mark, American psychologist and author of *Attention Span*, human attention spans have gone down from two and a half minutes to forty-seven seconds. Over time, we have trained our minds extremely well to get distracted and lose focus. We then complain that we aren't being productive or getting enough work done. The other day, I was sending some emails and needed a picture from my phone to attach. All of a sudden, 30 minutes had gone by – I was watching some random video on YouTube and had completely forgotten about the emails. Everyone is in the same boat. The sensory and technological distractions all around us are designed to seduce us. And then when we add emotional distractions and mind wandering, it gets even more complex! We find it hard to stay with one thing long enough to really engage with it, sink into it or find that flow. At the same time, small tasks can often feel like huge chores. This is where process visualisation can come into play.

Your attention is one of your greatest assets. And in today's world, a focused fool will achieve more than a distracted genius. When you use process visualisation to improve focus or concentration, it does three key things:

1. Primes the brain.
2. Instigates a flow state.
3. Gives you more cognitive control.

As you visualise a task, your brain begins to treat it as if you've already done it, making the actual task feel more familiar and less daunting. It also helps you access a state of flow, where you become deeply immersed in your work without distraction. This increases your productivity without adding mental strain. Lastly, by mentally rehearsing distractions and refocusing, you train your brain to stay on task more effectively, even when distractions arise.

FOCUS AND PRODUCTIVITY VISUALISATION (30 SECONDS–4 MINUTES, DEPENDING ON THE TASK)

Recommended track: Either no music for total focus or ‘Inspirational Piano’ by AShamaluevMusic

1. **Prepare:** Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Move your body to release tension, take five deep breaths and a moment of stillness.
2. **Mentally rehearse the task:** Picture the task you need to complete. It can be as simple as writing and sending a few emails, it can be running an errand, it can be completing a piece of work for your boss or it can be reading for ten minutes. Add all the details. Where are you sitting? Are you on your laptop? What are you wearing?
3. **Visualise completion:** See yourself executing and finishing the task successfully. This is the key part – to repeatedly visualise yourself completing the task until it feels easy and effortless in your mind. Finish the task in your mind again and again.
4. **Spend extra time on challenging tasks:** If you find a particular task difficult or have resistance to it, spend more time visualising that one. Picture yourself staying focused, even if distractions arise, and bring your attention back to the task.
5. **Close with focus:** Take five more deep breaths, a moment of stillness, gently open your eyes and start the task.

MENTALLY REHEARSING YOUR DAY

Visualising your day is an extension of visualising tasks. Just like how you physically get ready, this is the perfect way to mentally prepare yourself. In some ways, it is like mentally rehearsing your to-do list, but with more intention. I also add things like going to the gym or eating healthily in my visualisation. This might seem like a simple practice, but it can significantly help with organisation, energy and having more control of your day. Every morning, I visualise my day before it starts. If I know my day’s going to be especially busy, I do this the night before. It makes me more focused and productive.

It's also a good idea to make this slightly more aspirational. Andrew Huberman, the American neuroscientist and host of the podcast *Huberman Lab*, recently interviewed international author and mind–body researcher Martha Beck. In the interview, Beck explained how she spends time imagining her ideal day – rehearsing not only what she needs to do but also how she wants to feel and, most importantly, who she wants to be. Huberman agreed it's an exercise that often goes unnoticed, but is extremely powerful. The brain is a predictive machine, so when you envision your ideal day, it helps guide your actions towards making it a reality. This is especially valuable if you find yourself stuck in a repetitive cycle or feeling uninspired by your daily routine.

The following visualisation can help you become more intentional and excited about your day. The more you do it, the more you will start changing how you carry out your days.

REHEARSING YOUR DAY VISUALISATION (3 MINUTES)

Recommended track: 'I Giorni' by Ludovico Einaudi

1. **Prepare:** Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Move your body to release tension, take five deep breaths and a moment of stillness.
2. **Visualise the day:** Start mentally rehearsing the string of tasks you need to do from morning to evening, no matter how small, big, boring or exciting (meetings, emails, breaks, cooking, going to the gym, events and so on).
3. **Perform well:** See yourself executing them the way you want to – performing well, maintaining focus and executing with intention.
4. **Add emotion:** How do you want to feel today? Who do you want to show up as? What is your attitude going to be? Start adding this to your visualisation. Show yourself who you want to be. I would suggest choosing things like energised, calm, productive, confident and so on. If at this point you have developed your 'character' from the previous chapter (see [page 117](#)), you can bring them in here.
5. **Repeat:** Rehearse the day as many times as you need to until you feel ready to go.
6. **Take action:** Finish by seeing the first action you need to take after opening your eyes.
7. **Close with energy:** Take five more deep breaths, a moment of stillness and gently open your eyes.

When my clients tell me they have back-to-backs and feel overwhelmed, I remind them that they can take back control of their day by doing this in their mind first and then executing. With consistent practice, you'll find that you can focus better, accomplish more and even experience flow in your work. You can also extend this process to visualise longer time periods: your week, month or even an entire season. This ties into the concept of living life in seasons, which I introduced on [page 84](#). For example, I mentally rehearse my entire harvest season at the end of spring so I can start

building up more energy, practise my performance and set clear intentions for how I want to move through that time.

ENHANCING SPORTS AND FITNESS

Anyone who is passionate about sports or fitness stands to gain significantly from process visualisation. Whether you're an elite athlete competing on the world stage or someone working to maintain personal health, the process remains the same.

In 2020, Janette Hynes and Zach Turner conducted a study at Transylvania University to explore how positive process visualisation impacts strength training in collegiate athletes. Positive visualisation was defined as mentally rehearsing oneself performing physical movements to the best of one's ability, or even surpassing that – exactly what we've been practising in the previous exercises. The study involved 133 student athletes (70 females, 63 males) from various sports. At the start, the researchers recorded the maximum weight each test subject could lift. The test group was then instructed to visualise themselves performing weightlifting movements, such as the bench press, back squat, clean or deadlift, imagining they were lifting heavier weights than usual while executing each movement with perfect form. The visualisation sessions lasted five to fifteen minutes, were scheduled consistently each day and were accompanied by motivational music. Meanwhile, the control group engaged only in physical training, without the mental rehearsal. After three weeks, both groups continued their regular training routines, and their maximum lifts were measured once more.

The results were striking: athletes who practised process visualisation showed a significant improvement in strength compared to the control group. The test group increased their maximum lifts by an average of 4.5–7kg (10–15lb), while the control group showed a modest increase of about 2.3kg (5lb). Isn't that incredible?

I currently use process visualisation to run further. A year ago, I could barely run for 10 minutes. Now, before each run, I mentally rehearse myself going a bit further. Within three months of consistent practice, I started to run effortlessly for 30 minutes daily. While physical training would've

eventually helped, mental rehearsal accelerated my progress because I am neurologically reprogramming myself to perform better.

Entrepreneur and powerlifter Jodie Cook uses process visualisation for her lifting competitions. She visualises every aspect of the day and lift, making the experience so familiar it becomes muscle memory. This prepares her to perform under pressure. I see consistent improvements in athletes at all levels when they apply process visualisation. It helps them outperform themselves and others. And of course, when you are playing on the world stage, this is the difference between being good and being a champion.

Some athletes also use process visualisation after a performance to reflect and learn. After a game or match, they'll close their eyes and mentally review how it went. They analyse what went well, where they could have improved, and what adjustments they could make for the future. This 'mental replay' lets them refine their techniques and mentally prepare for the next competition. It's like giving yourself another chance to play the game in your mind, improving your skills without the physical toll.

IMPROVING SPORTS AND FITNESS VISUALISATION (5–8 MINUTES)

Take a moment to think about an area in fitness or sport that you want to refine or improve. This could be taking a football penalty, lifting heavier weights or a long-term goal such as running a marathon.

Recommended track: 'Pathos' by Ludovico Einaudi

1. **Prepare:** Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Move your body to release tension, take five deep breaths and a moment of stillness.
2. **Place yourself in the environment:** Start by mentally immersing yourself in the exact environment where you'll perform. Imagine every detail – whether it's the track, gym, field, court or road. Notice the smells, sounds, temperature and textures around you.
3. **Add more details:** Start to see yourself performing the activity well. Visualise the movements in step-by-step detail: What are your legs doing? How do your arms move? Where is your focus? Picture your body in motion, feeling strong and coordinated. Be as precise as possible; imagine every movement, every adjustment and every position.
4. **Build momentum:** Now, amplify the energy of the performance. Feel the sweat. Get into a rhythm and flow. What does performing 1 per cent or 10 per cent better look like? Rehearse the action again and again until it feels effortless.
5. **Add emotion:** How does it feel in your body? How do you want to feel as you are doing it? Feel the adrenaline. The drive. The strength. See yourself overcoming the harder moments too if needed.
6. **Close with grit:** Once the action and activity feel aligned, take five more deep breaths, a moment of stillness and gently open your eyes.

By following this visualisation regularly, you can start to see real improvements in your performance. The mind and body work together, and

with consistent mental rehearsal, you'll begin to achieve better results in less time.

BREAKING AND BUILDING HABITS

Habits, whether good or bad, shape our daily lives. A habit is an action you have repeated enough times for it to become second nature and therefore deeply wired in the brain. By leveraging process visualisation you can reprogram your mind to break unhelpful habits as well as start new ones. Let's start with breaking them.

We all have bad habits. It might be smoking, overeating, biting your nails, procrastinating ... the list goes on. The key to breaking these habits is disrupting the automatic loop and introducing intentional choice. I'm going to give you a very personal example. When I was recovering from my last flare, at first I didn't leave my house because of the fear of having an accident. Then, for the first few times, I decided to wear a nappy. It acted as a safety blanket, especially in the car or when I went for a short walk. As time went on, I kept wearing them. It wasn't a conscious decision anymore; it was just part of getting ready. A year later, I realised I was still in the habit of wearing them even though I didn't need them. Each day I would visualise myself getting ready and actively throwing away the nappy. I repeated this again and again to disrupt my mind and normal behaviour. After a few weeks, there was one particular day when I stopped myself in my tracks and had the ability to choose differently. After I had done it once, I kept going. This was the new habit I was practising – being able to leave the house without a nappy. I haven't worn them for years.

One of my clients is an international singer. After she performs, she has a massive low. She uses food to comfort herself, but really wanted to get out of the habit of emotional eating. We followed a similar process. As we practised the visualisation, I asked her to see herself picking up the food and, just as she was about to eat it, putting it down. We repeated this visualisation again and again until it felt natural for her to disrupt the automatic emotional eating. Over time, she was able to break the habit. Instead of turning to food, she replaced it with healthier alternatives like writing or connecting with a friend. The visualisation practice helped her take control of her actions in those vulnerable moments.

In addition to breaking bad habits, process visualisation is incredibly powerful for building new ones. When starting a new habit, the mind often resists the change because the action feels unfamiliar. However, by mentally rehearsing the habit, you prime your brain for success.

One well-known thinker, Naval Ravikant, explains how he uses visualisation when adopting new habits. He picks a habit he wants to cultivate, whether it's meditation, exercise or journalling, and visualises himself doing it over and over again. This mental rehearsal makes the habit feel familiar before he even begins, which accelerates the process of building it in real life.

When you see yourself completing the habit in your mind, you're not just imagining it, you're training your brain to adopt it. The neural pathways associated with the habit are forming and strengthening, making it easier to perform and stick to. To solidify habits, combine process visualisation with outcome visualisation. Mentally fast-forward a year into the future and picture yourself having maintained the habit. What does your life look like? What benefits have you gained? This long-term perspective helps you see beyond the immediate struggle and reinforces your commitment. Take a moment now to choose a habit you want to break or start. Spend 3–5 minutes mentally rehearsing the process.

LETTING GO

So far, we've looked at the application of process visualisation to enhance performance. I wanted to include a section on letting go because it, too, is a skill and process. Letting go can be difficult – whether it is a person, a situation, a grudge, a past memory, guilt or resentment. I recently experienced something in my personal life where I felt extremely betrayed and hurt by someone. It left me feeling insecure, ashamed and anxious, completely robbing me of my peace. Like many, I was told, 'You can't control it; just let it go.' As if it were that simple. Over time, I have realised that sheer logic doesn't help me release what I'm holding on to, especially when emotions run deep. What does help is engaging the mind in a process, something tangible yet symbolic to guide it through the act of letting go.

Visualisation can be an extremely effective tool for this. By using imagery tied to the natural flow of water, the brain can process adapting and

letting go more easily.

LETTING GO VISUALISATION (3–5 MINUTES)

Recommended track: 'The Tree' by Ludovico Einaudi

1. **Prepare:** Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Move your body to release tension, take five deep breaths and a moment of stillness.
2. **Locate:** Imagine you are sitting by a flowing river. Listen to the sound of the water, feel the wind in your hair and just focus on how the water is moving.
3. **Mentally write:** Now, in your visualisation, write down the person, situation, event or feeling that you want to let go of on a piece of paper.
4. **Place the paper into the river:** Watch it start to drift away. It goes further and further. Keep watching until you can barely see it. It's so far out, the piece of paper has now gone.
5. **Let go:** Focus back on the flowing water and take five more deep breaths. With each exhale, let go of any emotion or memory that has come up.
6. **Repeat:** Continue this with as many different things as you need to or as many times as you need to.
7. **Close with relief:** Take five more deep breaths, a moment of stillness and gently open your eyes.

If you are sceptical, I understand; I was too. But as I have emphasised, your mind really struggles to know the difference between what is real and what is imagined (see [page 25](#) for a reminder of the science). When you symbolically release something through visualisation, the brain treats it as a real action. Over time, with repetition, the weight of what you're holding on to starts to lift. So, if you find it hard to let go, I urge you to try this exercise. Sometimes, I need to repeat it four or five times to fully feel the release, but, eventually, it works. I can physically, mentally and emotionally let go of whatever I've been holding on to. It's a practice that gets easier the more you do it, and it can offer a sense of relief that is hard to find through logic alone.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Now that we've covered various applications of process visualisation, let's look at the kind of results you can expect. Immediately after process visualisation, people tend to feel more focused, prepared and energised. You may also feel more calm and more in control, but this will largely depend on how you are applying it. If you do process visualisation just before the performance or task, you will notice a change in how you execute it.

For an even greater effect, you can combine process visualisation with outcome visualisation. To do this, first, you see the end result in advance, then you mentally rehearse the processes that are aligned with it. For example, you see yourself crossing the finish line in the marathon, celebrating and building the belief you can do it. Then you mentally rehearse doing the actual run, embodying the movements, the feeling of exertion and the flow of the run. This improves your capability and technique.

In the long term, you can use process visualisation to significantly improve the standard and consistency of your performance, especially with skill-based activities like public speaking and sports. The benefits include improved focus, better resilience and excellent execution. Take Simone Biles for instance. She experienced the 'twisties' (a psychological phenomenon that happens when a gymnast loses their sense of body control when performing or in the air) at the Tokyo Olympics, leaving her fearful to get back on the gym floor or execute any moves. It was so extreme she pulled out of the Olympics. Not only was this heartbreaking for her, but there was also a serious risk she would never be able to perform again at that level. Through intense mental and visualisation training, she was guided to process her routines again and again. She saw herself doing them perfectly and confidently. Four years later, at the Paris Olympics, not only did she execute the hardest vault any gymnast has ever achieved, but she also won three gold medals, something she admitted she couldn't have done without visualisation. This is a great example that no matter where you are in your career or skillset, you can get better at it.

One thing I have noticed when using this method myself and teaching it to others is that, if you are already pretty good at a skill like public speaking or playing a sport, you will see and feel the positive impact on your performance very quickly. Even though the changes may be 1 per cent

better, at that level, those small improvements make a big difference. For instance, an athlete might shave seconds off their race time or a speaker might captivate their audience in a new way. Over time, these tiny shifts accumulate into noticeable, significant improvements. If you are using it for a skill you are learning or perhaps aren't as good at, the results may take a little longer to see, simply because you are creating new pathways instead of making existing ones even stronger. With consistent practice, the results come. Process visualisation helps make the unfamiliar feel familiar and the difficult feel achievable.