

Monday, July 31, 2006

Book Review

Staying Well with Guided Imagery

Author: Naparstek, Belleruth ISBN: 0-446-51821-2 Format: Hard cover Pub. Date: 1994 Publisher: NY: Warner Books Pages: 228 Cost: \$19.95 (List) Available: Amazon & eBay; at as low as \$11.16 (new) \$5.16 (used) - \$5.28 at eBay & eBay;

Subtitle:

How to Harness the Power of Your Imagination for Health and Healing The Books' Topics:

How and Why Imagery Works

Different Kinds of Imagery

Imagery for Health

Imagery for Emotional Resiliency

Imagery Exercises for Common Complaints

The central themes of this book are:

The healing response to imagery is innate and powerful

Imagery improves health, learning and performance

Imagery methods are adaptable using taped scripts, music, and suggestion

Imagery is a natural skill of the unconscious mind

Creative imagery methods work for just about everybody

Keywords:

Imagery

Altered State of Consciousness

Relaxation and Reverie

Scripts

Main Idea: The use of Guided Imagery and the production of Guided Imagery recordings is a scientific method for helping people heal themselves better and faster.

These guided imagery methods also work for self-improvements in emotional response, attitude and performance.

The altered state that the daydream-like guided imagery elicits is beneficial for healing, learning and changing habits.

Practice with imagery techniques produces greater skill and accelerated (sometimes amazing) results.

Quotes: Note: Bold text reflects font weight in the original.

"...most people make the mistake of thinking that imagery means something strictly visual...When I refer to imagery, I'm talking about any perception that comes through any of the senses." (p. - 17)

"These sensory images are the true language of the body, the only language it understands immediately and without question. To the body, these images can be almost as real as actual events...Our bodies don't discriminate between sensory images in the mind and what we call reality." (p. - 17 & 18)

"In the altered state, we are capable of more rapid and intense healing, growth, learning, and change." (p. - 22 & 23)

"By altered state, I mean a state of relaxed focus, a kind of calm but energized alertness, a focused reverie. Attention is concentrated on one thing, or on a very narrow band of things. As this happens, we find that we have increased sensitivity to what we are focused on, and a decreased awareness of the other things that are going on around us, things that we would ordinarily notice." (p. - 23)

"We are in and out of altered states all day long. Sometimes it's just for a matter of seconds." (p. - 23)

"We feel better about ourselves when we have a sense of mastery over what is happening to us. Conversely, a sense of helplessness lowers self-esteem, not to mention our ability to cope and our hopefulness about the future." (p. - 26)

"Skill at using imagery increases with practice...The more you use imagery, the more your response to it deepens, intensifies, and becomes controllable. So don't make limiting assumptions about your capacity. It will grow exponentially." (p. - 28 & 29)

"Imagery works best in a permissive, unforced atmosphere. It is a gentle, amorphous, right-brain activity that thrives on a soft, receptive state of mind. Commanding, scolding, or threatening yourself will not only not work but will probably defeat your purpose." (p. - 31)

"Nor do old notions of 'paying attention' apply here. This is the sort of experience where it is normal to fade in and out.

So don't expect the kind of rigorous, alert attentiveness that you invoked to, say, study for exams. That was using the left side of your brain. This is your right side. The right brain is dreamy, nonlogical, and laid-back." (p. -32)

"It is certainly true that words are much more confining and limiting than images by themselves. The minute we try to cram what we perceive into the artificial constraints of language, we have already tampered with the truth and limited it

to some degree." (p. -36)

"Being in a relaxed, focused, altered state; using all of your senses for your imagery, and especially the feeling sense in the body; continued practice; going to the same place with the same props each time, at least initially; the same initial beginning rituals, such as taking two or three deep breaths; using music for background; the accompanying use of touch, such as putting your hands over your belly as you breathe; a permissive, unforced atmosphere; using images that feel right to you, as opposed to imposing an external ideas of "correctness" onto yourself; not trying too hard, and a willingness to stop for the moment if you think you are..."(p. -199)

"We all need to daydream spontaneously. This helps us solve problems, get in touch with deeper parts of ourselves, and take some much needed 'vacation' time from everyday reality." (p. - 199)

"...Children are naturals at using imagery. They respond to it very easily and very intensely, because they haven't had time to be acculturated away from this natural ability." (p. - 207)

"...imagery is bad for you when you use it to avoid taking responsibility for your life. The imagination is a fabulous gift and an amazing tool. It enriches our lives and extends our capacity for all manner of things. But it should never seduce us away from taking care of ourselves in normal, waking reality." (p. - 216)

Issues Addressed by the Book: The author focuses upon uses of imagery with serious health issues, i.e., cancer, cardiovascular issues, depression, grief and loss, and immune system malfunction. The author also focuses upon lesser issues such as headache, pain, allergies, insomnia and fatigue; issues that many teachers experience as a result of the stress of their jobs.

Teachers can also learn a great deal by modeling how these scripts give instructions and orders to students. The scripts give suggestions and imply benefits, they do not give orders.

Teachers should avoid giving orders that students don't already want to do, and teachers should avoid engaging in power struggles with students.

The use of recorded imagery scripts in a classroom setting provides the additional benefit of improving behavior, memory and performance. Due to the tendency of human nature for people to improve whenever they feel like that are being treated in a special way, teachers can communicate that students who hear these recordings are special. This pattern of improving in response to receiving special attention is commonly known as the "Hawthorne Effect."

The Book's Shortcomings: The book focuses upon clinical and extreme health issues for many of its pages. This makes the book less suitable for classroom teachers.

But, the book was written for clinicians, and for members of the general public who are beset with health issues.

The book also weaves instructions between pages instead of listing or directly addressing controversial ideas.

For example, the book weaves the belief in the existence of a "soul" into some of the scripts. This is a topic that most teachers in public schools would not dare to broach. In fact, many parochial schools might not support the personal, intuitive, self-directed spiritual communication that the author suggests because their specific, institutionalized dogma trumps personal experience of the ineffable.

Comments: Imagery is a tool that all teachers can use every day. The costs are small, especially if imagery scripts are read from a notebook. The script can be recorded once, and replayed many times. These recordings can also be used in a learning center.

More importantly, students can learn to integrate imagery with other learning skills and acquire a life-long benefit.

The author presents an accurate summary of the practical methods for using guided imagery in a nineteen page FAQ section at the back of the book. This is worth reading carefully. Other than that, the scripts in this book are a resource for a teacher who wants to integrate imagery procedures into classroom instruction.

The individual scripts are examples that were tested with a lot of patients afflicted with specific conditions. But, teachers can adapt the patterns as appropriate for their classes.

Summary: This, or a book like it is important for teachers because the linear, cognitive information spooning of teacher-delivered lecture material to students is marginally effective.

In addition, imagery is a tool that teachers can use to decrease their own stress, and to increase their recovery from late hours of mental exertion (a typical job hazard).

And, understanding the creative process involved in using "altered states" has connections to use for other strategies recommended by Classroom Toolkit.

These are:

Daily Inspirational Messages

See our newsletter article: [Link to the article...](#)

The Mutual Storytelling Technique

See our newsletter article: [Link to the article...](#)

Helping students cope with the stress of high-stakes tests

See our newsletter article concerning a saliva stress test and our recommendation [Link to the article...](#)

You didn't think that we were going to let the NCLB Law off the hook, did you? The NCLB Act is a major perpetrator (or as they say on the police shows, "Perp" of of stress in our schools.

Rating (Four Point scale):

Useful - 4

Applicable - 4

Relevant - 4
Innovative - 3
Original - 3
Interesting - 3

Overall Rating - 3.5

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Book Review at 05:00