

Imagine that!

Adults are prone to visualising things through a negative lens, but what happens when you tap into the power of your inner child's imagination?

Do you remember being really young and imagining what it would be like to travel somewhere far away and how much fun that would be? Or how amazing it would be to visit an amusement park? Or dreaming about someday driving a car wherever you wanted to go? I used to do this a lot and spent loads of time drifting off into my imagination, which was a fun place to be back then.

This is because when children use their imagination, they tend towards picturing a good future instead of a bad one, while also visualising the positive emotions that might be felt within their fantasy. Then along comes adulthood and gradually imagination starts being employed in the exact opposite way. Adults tend to use it to envision a not-so-great future and imagine themselves feeling the negative emotions brought about from these fictional outcomes. They might start picturing adverse conflicts and wonder how they're going to manage all the subsequent undesirable feelings.

Reality and reclaiming the fun picture

Of course, there are many understandable reasons why this happens. Previous experiences of difficult encounters or situations come into play and the weight of work, financial or familial responsibility often makes it difficult not to at least consider what might happen if events go awry. Given these factors, it's hardly surprising if our imagination, which was once used as a way to thrill and delight, becomes just another thing that brings on a state of anxiety and stress.

But wouldn't it be great to reclaim its use for feeling good, instead of bad? One way to start doing this is to remember how you felt when you were sitting there as a kid, daydreaming and picturing all the exciting things you were going to do. Not sure how? Try the following four-step visualisation techniques and let your imagination run wild with only fun things:

1. Firstly, imagine how you want to feel before you bring up the scenario. When you focus on the desired feeling, you can then fill in the picture of where it will take place and what you will

be doing. Want to feel calm and relaxed? Maybe you'll daydream about reclining on a secluded beach in the sunshine. Want to imagine having a lot of fun? Perhaps you'll visualise going bungee jumping and the feeling of weightlessness you'll have after stepping off the platform. Picture the sensations in your body and try to connect with the feeling first.

2. Don't get too hung up on specifics. Stay with the feeling. Picture general things to begin with, rather than details that might make you get sidetracked with imagined problems.

3. Want to imagine yourself having fun in Paris? Play some French music and start daydreaming. Write in a journal about beautiful things you enjoy. Take photos of flora and fauna you find inspiring. Watch shows about activities you've always wanted to try. Start tuning in more frequently to relaxing, fun images you find appealing. You probably did this as a kid more often than you remember. How often did you stare at books and posters that jump-started your imagination back then? For instance, I had a poster of some ballet pumps on my wall, and every night I'd stare at it and daydream about how fun it would be to be a ballerina. What things captured your attention?

4. Talk to yourself in an encouraging way. It's easy to normalise telling yourself negative things about the future, but as a kid, you're more likely to think along the lines of: 'That's going to be so much fun when I get to do that!' Try to tap into similar language on a daily basis and notice how it makes you feel.

Visualisation is an effective tool that can affect your emotional state. Bring out your inner child by using its power in a more creative way and see where the imaginary adventure leads you.

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