

Episode 7 – Mind Over Matter

John: We want to welcome you to Episode 7 of MindSolvers, where we will introduce one of the purest forms of visualization, one that has now been studied by sports psychologists for at least three decades, and that has the greatest potential to touch each and every one of us...and that is the concept of guided mental imaging or more aptly put, “mind over matter.”

Verl: Yes, I know that you’ve been ready to introduce this for several episodes now. It’s a fascinating topic, and if I hadn’t seen it affect my own life years ago, I’d have a hard time accepting it, But there’s a lot of evidence for it.

John: There are literally hundreds of topics that we can discuss that are offshoots of being able to relax the mind, and we will hopefully discuss them all, eventually, but this one is truly captivating—to consider that we each have the power within us, right now, to mentally influence our health and wellbeing, the renewal and regeneration of our physical body is more than incredible, it’s life altering!

Verl: Yeah, that’s an understatement. I’ve had some experience with this myself. When I got some bad news about my heart a number of years back, your remember, John, you began helping me with some visualization sessions regarding that, and the results were pretty amazing. But I think this is more appropriate to talk about a little later. So, John, what experiences have you had in visualization?

John: A number of years ago, I did a weekly stage hypnosis show for the high school kids in our area that went through the entire school year and that ended the year with a big show for the graduating seniors.

Verl: Well, now you’re bringing up the “H” word—hypnosis. But, I imagine our listeners have already figured out that the relaxation sessions are a form of hypnosis.

John: Oh, you’re right. It’s probably a good time then to explain that after 35+ years of helping people relax through the sensory perception techniques that we talked about and used in the first couple of episodes, that I felt a real need to write about what I considered some very unique experiences, and the end result was a trilogy of books.

Verl: Right, and links to those ebooks can be found on our website, MindSolvers.com.

John: That’s right. In the first book, I explain that early on, I had an epiphany one day of what to call these relaxation techniques, rather than relying on the word “hypnosis,” which tends to carry a rather negative connotation for some, to use the acronym “ReSPITE”. It seemed a perfect fit with dual meaning—the word “respite,” that denotes rest or relief, and the acronym, which stands for Relaxation, Sensory Perception Induced Trance Experience.

Verl: Oh, good explanation. So you decided to give them a show like we all imagine when we think of “hypnosis.”

John: Yeah, beyond the common, hilarious antics of any good stage hypnosis show were three of the most incredible suggestions that never failed to amaze the audience and myself each time I’d decide to do one of them.

Verl: Okay, you’d better tell us what they were.

John: I had the normal show that I would customize each week depending on who and how many new kids showed up (it actually grew to quite a crowd) and then there were the specialty ones that were set to amaze even the toughest skeptics.

Verl: I really wish I could have seen it—but I was probably teaching overseas then. I wish you’d recorded them for posterity!

John: I wasn't smart enough back then to keep track of who recorded them, but that's not important. What these kids' minds allowed them to do, demonstrated exactly what we're talking about today.

Verl: So visual proof of "mind over matter." What did you have them do?

John: Yes, Mind over matter. Each was uniquely suited to show just how powerful the mind is. One of them came right out of an old 70's movie called the "Tribe" starring Jan-Michael Vincent as a hippie, newly drafted into the US Marines. Do you remember it?

Verl: Doesn't ring a bell. What was it about?

John: The part that I loved and that is still stuck in my mind 50 years later, is where the drill sergeant played by Darren McGavin makes all the recruits hold a bucket filled with sand in each of their outstretched hands, and Vincent's character goes into his mind reliving a happy memory and is able to maintain his upheld hands while all the other recruits couldn't hold them up for even a few minutes.

Verl: So you had this in your show?!

John: Oh, yeah, and it worked without a hitch. Amazing!

Verl: No kidding. Tell us a little more about that.

John: It was done through a simple suggestion to one of the group already on stage that his shoulders and arms were made of pure steel. I found that it didn't matter the size of the bucket or how much sand was in them, as the person I called up out of the audience literally gave up in less than a minute, while the hypnotized person kept on going until I stopped him, usually only another minute or two.

Verl: That crazy, you hear about these things, but it's hard to imagine it really happening. So what are the other amazing things you'd try?

John: One is called the "human plank," that I had read about and was curious to see if it really was physically possible.

Verl: Wait a minute. You mean where you place someone's head and feet between two chairs with a chair supporting the back, and then you take out the middle chair?

John: Yes, exactly, except that was just the beginning. If you can imagine the distance between these chairs is the full length of the person, five or six feet, right? So you have a tall, skinny kid straddle the chairs, stiff as a board, or a piece of steel...and their mind has them believe it...then you get a big, muscular kid stand on him, right in the center, and you watch to see that his outstretched body doesn't give an inch!!!

Verl: You really did that, John!

John: I have to tell you, Verl, that I was really nervous the first time I tried this...I wasn't sure what was going to happen...but their body remained straight as a board and didn't give at all!

Verl: That's so hard to believe! How did the guys feel after all this?

John: Remember, I saw these kids every week, and neither the bucket-of-sand nor the human-plank had any ill effects.

Verl: Now I think I remember you telling me about your third amazing demonstration. Something about a certain food, right?

John: Well, like I said, they were each very different and unique and showed just how powerful this mind of ours is. So before the show, I would go down to the local supermarket and buy one of the strongest onions I could find.

Verl: An onion? Oh, yes. I remember this.

John: I hid it off stage in a paper bag so no one could smell it (I picked only the strongest). I would have one of the kids stand up in front of everyone and tell them that in the bag was their

favorite fruit that I had just bought at the store before the show (I really had no idea what fruit was in their mind and didn't really care, just that it was their favorite). I then pulled it out of the bag and presented it to them and suggested that they take a big bite and describe the taste.

Verl: And you're telling me that they didn't taste the onion.

John: They described the sweetest, juicy flavor imaginable. And it wasn't until I snapped my fingers and brought them out of the suggestion, that the full impact of the hot onion hit them, which is why I had the paper bag, of course.

Verl: I don't get it.

John: What would be your reaction if you bit into a strong onion by mistake? Exactly, it was spit out like a projectile, and I didn't want to have to clean up the mess.

Verl: Oh, yeah. That was thinking ahead. But actually, I remember once having something slightly like that happen to me. Many years ago, I was reading a book. And there was a glass of water I'd been drinking from. Maybe something in the book made me think of juice, or maybe I was craving juice. I don't know, but when I took a sip of it, for the slightest moment, I tasted the juice. And I wasn't even hypnotized! At least not in the classic sense.

John: Well, remember in Episode 5 when we talked about pretending that the characters and situations in a movie are real so that we can enjoy it more? It can be a very similar experience while reading a well-written nonfiction book, right?

Verl: Oh, I guess that makes sense. Sure.

John: And I was never disappointed with how a simple suggestion to the mind, while in a deeply relaxed state of mind, could alter our beliefs...truly, mind over matter.

Verl: Yeah, I guess. Well, I know you've been interested in these things for a long time, right?

John: Well, back when I was in high school, one of my favorite sports was Track & Field.

Verl: You did some jumping, right?

John: A long jumper, and in my senior year I read in Sports Illustrated about Olympic long jumpers experimenting with a mid-air somersault.

Verl: Wait, a what?

John: A mid-air somersault. Instead of planting the foot on the takeoff board and flinging myself forward through the air, the idea was to plant the foot and then do a flip through the air instead—just the thought got me so excited.

Verl: So you were actually able to do this somersault!

John: No, every one of us that tried it bruised our tailbone.

Verl: (chuckles)

John: It was banned in regular competition anyway, but we practiced and trained with it and then prepped for real meets using visualization.

Verl: Oh, I've read about sports teams using visualization in their training. Is it the same?

John: Virtually!

Verl: (Groans)

John: (hah-hah) No, really. One big difference is that the sports world uses it to become better at what sport they're in, whereas we knew we weren't allowed to use what we were visualizing.

Verl: That's weird. But that must've put a damper on it.

John: Not at all. In fact, I was so "psyched" by visualizing this mid-air somersault in my mind that at our very first meet, I jumped a full foot beyond my own best mark and broke the school record in the process!

Verl: No kidding, so you broke your own AND your high school record?!

John: I did, but it was only good for about 20 minutes, because once my team mates heard what had happened, it was like something snapped in their brains and in a total mental frenzy my short-lived school record was broken over and over and over again that day.

Verl: Wow! Your mental excitement became contagious. Yes, it's like the story of breaking the four-minute mile. No one thought anyone could do it, but once Roger Bannister did it, it only took a couple of months for others to break it, and something like 1400 runners have done it since.

John: Exactly! And it showed me at the young age of 17 that anything is possible if you know how to convince your mind that it's true.

Verl: Cool. So even though it sounds different, in a similar way athletes use visualization, or guided imagery, to train and get better at their sport.

John: Yeah, in fact there have been more studies on this subject than anyone can keep track of, done over the last 30+ years, that scientifically proves that when we visualize an act in our minds, the neurons in our brains can't differentiate between imagery and real-life action (in other words, we stimulate the very same brain regions during visualization as when we actually perform that same action physically).

Verl: Do you know of any athletes that have used it?

John: Yes, plenty. All we have to do is bring up the most decorated Olympian of all time, Michael Phelps, whose coach (Bob Bowman) had Michael watch his "mental videotape" every day before going to sleep and as he woke up in the morning and during his training sessions.

Verl: Huh! I hadn't heard of that. Creating a "mental videotape," that's a very interesting idea.

John: And we could probably spend several hours just talking about the best athletes in every known sport from basketball to cycling who've been trained using mental imaging.

Verl: Ok, so where else can visualization help in life?

John: Well, professional cyclist James Paolineti famously said: "Limitations live only in our minds. But if we use our imaginations, our possibilities become limitless." Limitless! So the answer has to be, anywhere we choose to use it. Do you remember the story "The King's Speech?"

Verl: Sure, as a matter of fact, Hilda and I watched it just about a month ago.

John: Yeah. The screenwriter for that movie, David Seidler, was a stutterer just like King George VI and also suffered from cancer, just like the king. The most interesting part of this story is that Seidler says that his health is largely due to *visualizing his cancer away*.

In an article about his experience on cnn.com, Seidler said: "I spent hours visualizing a nice, cream-colored unblemished bladder lining, and then I went in for the operation, the surgeon said: 'I don't know how to explain it, but there's no cancer there.'" Seidler said "the doctor was so confounded he sent the tissue from the presurgical biopsy to four different labs, and all confirmed they were cancerous... The doctor couldn't explain how it had happened." Seidler told cnn.com that "he believes that visualizations were behind what his doctor called a 'spontaneous remission'."

Verl: It's really fascinating. I know this leads right into my "heart" story, but I think it would be good to end here and bring it up in our next session, which is going to deal with actual tissue regeneration by the power of the mind. So, podcast listeners, I'm going to tease you with this and hope that you'll join us in our next episode.

By the way, I'd like to add something John and I have talked about. Just as during this and earlier podcasts, our discussion reminded me of some experiences I had had, we'd like to know if

you've had any similar things happen to you, or if you simply have questions about our podcasts or the experiences you've had from the relaxation sessions, we've given you.

So, we want you to go to our website, MindSolvers.com and click on the link to set up a short visit with John. He'd love to hear from you, and maybe we'll even talk about your experiences on the podcast with your permission. While you're at MindSolvers.com, take a look at the website and see the other things available there.

But I think John has a very interesting relaxation session for us today, very much relating to our discussion. So, as always, make sure you're sitting or lying down in a comfortable place, where you can best listen and enjoy the experience.

John: And now, if you haven't already, allow your eyes to gently close as you slowly take in several deep, cleansing breaths and allow yourself to begin even now to relax, both mentally and physically, recognizing that any and all sensations that you experience during this session will only tend to deepen that level of relaxation that you are seeking...with each and every sound you hear, all noises from beyond your walls, doors opening or closing, traffic from outside, even clocks ticking, people speaking, or phones ringing, all are common and natural sounds and will help you relax that much more deeply. With every breath you take, you find yourself relaxing deeper and deeper...knowing that the slightest discomfort (an itch that needs to be scratched, shifting your body for the most comfortable position) can be quickly and easily self-managed without disturbing in the slightest that level of relaxation already achieved.

And I'd like to now entreat the help of the subconscious mind to assist with any imagery, sensations, or memories that can assist in the deepening of your relaxation during this session, as I make the suggestion that you find yourself comfortably standing alone in the most beautifully adorned elevator on the top floor of the world's most securely constructed building...you feel perfectly safe and protected as you feel the elevator car begin its descent, slowly and gradually moving downward. You know and enjoy that very familiar sensation of the downward motion. You look around yourself and examine the exquisite decorations and hear the peaceful, calming music playing ever so softly and the occasional ding-chime indicating that you've passed yet another floor in your gradual descent, and you feel yourself doubling in relaxation, deeper and deeper as each floor is passed...the downward motion deepening that feeling of total relaxation. And soon, you know that you will reach the bottom floor, the basement level, and that those doors will eventually open to something truly amazing and spectacular, but will only be experienced at the lowest level of relaxation...as you now let go of any and all remaining worldly cares and concerns and prepare for the elevator car to eventually come to a complete and comfortable stop and a new world open up to you. In just a moment, you'll feel the downward motion cease and the car come to a final stop and the doors slowly open...even now.

What you see through the opening doors, with the skillful assistance of the subconscious mind, is the miraculous world of your inner body. As you step into the clear spherical-shaped bubble that will transport you on this amazing journey starting at your toes and rising upward through your entire body, you begin to see all the bones, joints, muscles, tendons, veins, and arteries in perfect detail.

This bubble has all the essential accommodations to make this ride both comfortable and educational (a reclining overstuffed chair and a large audio/visual screen that will give full explanations of all the various parts of the body that you'll be passing by on your gradual ascent to your very own brain). You can relax and spend as much time as you desire on this exploratory

journey in preparation for our next episode when we will focus attention to specific areas of our body that might require some repair and refurbishing...and I'd like to suggest that the subconscious mind provide the very areas that you specifically need to pay attention to. Let me also suggest that the subconscious mind provide a different word or phrase than what we were given before that you can use any time that you want to return to this internal world of your body and place into your conscious awareness...even now. Keep this word or phrase and use it often to practice relaxing and entering this amazing world.

Verl: And when you're ready to return to your conscious state, as always, we suggest that you feel peaceful, and refreshed, that you're encouraged about your life and your health and your future. And until you join us in the next episode of MindSolvers we want to give you a gift of energy and confidence in taking on all your responsibilities, and the knowledge that your subconscious mind will work with you to help you in these things, and to recognize the beauty that is everywhere around you, and which lies inside you.

John: And only when you're ready, simply open your eyes...