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## **Visualization and Successful Presentations**

When I train groups or coach individuals in presentation skills, I encourage them to drown out the negative voices in their heads with a positive mantra and visualize themselves successfully giving an effective presentation.

The power of visualization has long been used by top athletes to achieve high performance and it also applies to giving presentations. I recently read a concise description of visualization in *The Best Tennis of Your Life: 50 Mental Strategies for Fearless Performance* by Jeff Greenwald, a sports psychology consultant and former world-ranked tennis player.

In chapter 12, "Visualize After Errors and Before Matches," Greenwald recommends the following process for successful visualization [I am paraphrasing loosely]:

- Find a quiet place
- Relax your mind
- Take deep breaths for about 5 minutes and focus on your breathing
- Imagine yourself succeeding – exaggerate the image and allow yourself to experience what success feels like, looks like and sounds like
- Use a quick snapshot of this image to focus yourself before you play [or in your case, present] and also to refocus yourself after you've made an error

You can apply the same steps to visualizing your presentation success. Imagine what it feels like to hear your name spoken by the person introducing you at the event or welcoming you to the meeting. Then feel yourself walking confidently to the front of the room or smiling as everyone seated at the table turns toward you. Experience the sensation of delivering your content with ease, overcoming any fear or anxiety.

If you stumble over a word, forget what you were going to say next or go blank when someone asks you a question, call up the images of you eloquently describing your topic, easily remembering what comes next and confidently responding to a question. These positive images will help you make a quick mid-course correction and prevent a small mistake from snowballing into a presentation disaster.

The next time you have to give a presentation, try these visualization steps. Along with your other preparation and practice, visualization can help you deliver an Olympic-worthy presentation.

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