

YOUR MIND CAN SET YOU FREE (OR IT CAN IMPRISON YOU)

By **CHRIS SILVERSTEIN, RN, MPA**

In the recent movie, *Amistad*, the African slave, whose hands and feet are shackled, dramatically stands up during his trial and says, "Give us free!" In his case, the restraints placed on him were actual physical barriers that prevented him from realizing true American freedom. But then there are circumstances in life in which no visible restraints exist, except those that we place on ourselves. Look, now, at the old man who sits in a wheelchair and says he can no longer stand. Although he is seemingly capable to at least take a few steps, he says he can't. He is held back by the restraints of time. Now see a 12-year-old boy who is walking out on to the wrestling mat, and he is so afraid that he may lose the match that he is incapable of performing to his best potential. There are many more scenarios that I could describe to you, but I think you get the point by now. There are those obstacles to success in life that we all encounter, but some of them are "real" shackles and others are self-imposed. As human beings, we seem to strive towards freedom, but sometimes we place unnecessary burdens and restraints on ourselves.

Of course, these "restraints" are not intentional in that we do not inflict them on ourselves knowingly. They are rather insidious and seem to creep up over a lifetime of negative programming. It is based on *FEAR* - fear of failure and sometimes fear of success. Do you remember the first time that someone told you, "You can't do that!" when you thought it was possible? Maybe it was a teacher who said, "Joan, you'll never learn how to write! I give up on you!" Or maybe it was your baseball coach who relegated you to the bench because you weren't good enough for the team! After a while, one begins to lose confidence in oneself, and gives up hope of being successful and trying new things. In our society, even young children have already been indoctrinated to this way of thinking; that is, they are saying to themselves, "I am a loser! I can't seem to do anything right!"

Fortunately, none of this lack of confidence or fear has to be so! The reason

for this is clear. Look at some of the ancient wisdom handed down to us from the Bible. It says, "Whoever a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." In other words, what a person tells himself he is, he is! Our self-talk and our "vision" of who



we think we are, makes us into that person. In essence we become prophets, for we create our own reality.

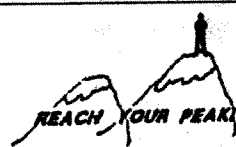
Many people limit themselves by believing that they were not born talented enough or smart enough to succeed, but, in actuality, their future success is more dependent on how they train now, rather than on their genetic gifts at birth. Too often, we create negative images in our minds prior to engaging in an activity, and this leads to anxiety, low self-image, poor atti-

tudes and expectations. Is a "winning attitude" enough? Most of the time it is not because it does not help you to concentrate or focus on the skills needed to accomplish your goals. It is a known fact that emotions affect every cell in your body. Mind, body and spirit are intertwined. When emotional stress and anxiety grow out of control, your performance suffers. Anxiety can be distracting, can ruin strategy and judgment, can create avoidance, and can halt development. It can also make you too sick to function.

Be aware that there is something you can do! But you may ask at this point, "How can I learn to be more effective in life and consistently perform toward the upper range of skill and talent, regardless of the circumstances of life?" Well, take heart! A simple and effective approach is available, one that everybody, both children and adults, can learn.

With relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, visualization, and hypnosis, one can redirect their negative thinking to positive thinking. Despite popular misconceptions, hypnosis is a tool which allows a person to use more of their mind and to use it more effectively. Hypnosis is for the modern mind and is 100 percent natural. It is relaxed receptivity with increased perception, a state of deep relaxation which quiets the body and opens the mind. When defenses are down, the

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Relaxation techniques, breathing exercises, visualization, and hypnosis are used to redirect negative thinking to positive thinking, and remove barriers and limitations we have placed on ourselves or allowed others to place on us.

Help for Children and Adults

CHRISTINE M. SILVERSTEIN, RN, MPA
Certified Hypnotherapist

201-760-1600 • [Redacted] Ramsey, N.J. 07446

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mind is open to positive suggestions, the type of which is determined by a person's goals and ideals. For the most profound effect, suggestions need to be given in a very relaxed state to suspend the rational, logical filters in the conscious mind. Hypnosis removes the barriers and limitations we, as individuals, have placed on ourselves or allowed others to place on us.

In several sessions, self-hypnosis, mental rehearsal, mental recall, and positive self-talk can be learned. These techniques can be applied to many areas of your life where performance is important; that is, in sport, performing arts, writing, education, business, and health. You can learn to face any challenge in your future. Like a gardener, you plant the specific thought-seeds in the garden of your mind. Hypnosis helps you to care for and nourish the seeds so that they grow and bear fruit. In your subconscious mind these thought-seeds grow into your reality. This garden of your mind is much more fertile than you think. Your growth is unlimited! You alone choose what you are going to plant and reap, and you are the master of your own fate. Stand up now and say, "Give us free!" What do you have to lose?