



Episode 42: The Power of Visioning

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Here's my question today: What's a part of your life where you want to take some next steps, and you're not quite sure what those are or where to start. And when you think about this part of your life, you immediately get stressed because it feels too hard. What comes to mind?

Today, I am going to share a strategy that will make it easier for your brain to think about that part of your life and feel confident about the next steps you can take. Today's brain-friendly tool will help you think about the future in a way that feels less scary and more possible. Because we know that it can be scary and overwhelming to think about the future, especially when that future is untried and unknown.

As I always remind my clients, we have a choice about how we think about our life. Broadly speaking, we can look at the parts of our life from a positive perspective or a negative perspective. When we are able to approach our life with a more positive mindset, we can take action more easily, see possibilities more clearly, and make decisions more confidently.

And the strategy we're talking about today is also fun. It invites us to imagine and dream. It invites our brain to create a story about our future – one that we want and are excited about.

This strategy is called visioning.

Maybe you've heard about athletes and performers who use visioning before a game or concert to imagine themselves playing and performing at their best. They see themselves as strong and skilled. They see in their minds' eye the outcome they're wanting.

Even if we're not a professional athlete, we can use visioning to help us create the life we want.

Visioning is a way for our brain to time travel. It invites our brain to imagine something as if it's already happened. When we vision, our brain leaps forward in time effortlessly and places us in an as-yet-unhappened scenario. In that scenario, our brain thinks the future is now. It lets us feel, see, hear, and think as we might in that situation.

Here's the cool thing about the brain: when we vision, it's as if it's really happening in our brain and body. For the brain, it's like we're really there.

We use this to our advantage. We can mine our brain for the wisdom it has about this future scenario. When we create a vision and flesh it out – really see and absorb all the details, our brain sees the situation as possible. And when our brain sees something as possible, it's less resistant to taking steps to move forward. When our brain sees something as possible, it's more open to figuring out how to create a pathway to get there.

You might be wondering how to use visioning in real life. I want to share an example of a time I used visioning with a team.

A few years ago, I worked with a team at a global organization that was undergoing change. They were being asked to work in new ways, with new job descriptions. They were excited, and because there was so much newness and high expectations, there was also worry.

On a group call, I led the team through a visioning exercise. Now, to do visioning effectively, you need to have some idea about the outcome you want in the future. You don't have to know how to get there – you just have to know some of the details about what you want.

In addition to having some details about the scenario you're going to imagine, visioning works best when our body is calm and centered. I invited the team to start the process by closing their eyes, settling in their chairs, and taking a few calming breaths. I invited them to keep their eyes closed while I described their desired future.

I asked them to let their imagination go and invited them to travel with me a few years into the future. In this future, they're settled and doing amazingly in their new roles. I described how they were collaborating, innovating, and being recognized for their achievements. I shared that they were proud of the obstacles they had overcome and they had created processes that were working well.

I also interspersed some questions for their brains to answer in this future scenario. I asked, Who are you working with? What's an obstacle you overcame? What's a new idea you've put into action? I waited while they answered these questions silently to themselves.

After we returned from our mental time travel, I invited the group to open their eyes, and take a few minutes to write down the ideas, answers, and takeaways they wanted to remember.

When we debriefed, they shared how powerful the visioning was. They said they were able to see themselves in this future, and described how it felt and what it was like.

Then they shared ideas about how to make this future happen. From visioning, ideas flow. And just like that, they identified their next action steps. Most importantly, they felt confident about taking these steps, because they knew it was enabling the future they wanted.

That's the power of visioning. It's an opportunity for the brain to see the future as if it's a foregone conclusion that of course is going to happen.

This is very different than thinking about the future from today. Looking forward into the unknown can be stressful. Starting in an imagined future and looking backward to understand how it happened is much easier.

Let's bring this to you.

You can use visioning with your team to build engagement and strategy around a goal. You can use it in a 1:1 to help someone get excited about a project.

You can also use visioning by yourself, as you think about your future and a part of your life that feels stuck.

Here's how to talk yourself through visioning. Start by clarifying the part of your life you want to move forward and imagine some details of what you want the outcome to be.

For example, suppose you want to find a new job, and you're feeling overwhelmed about where to start.

Invite your brain to envision yourself in a new role, meeting new colleagues, introducing yourself confidently, and decorating your home or in-person office. As you see and feel this vision in your mind's eye, ask yourself some coaching questions, like:

-To get here, who's one person I reached out to?

-What's one skill I worked on for this new role?

-What's one thing I accomplished in my last job that helped me get this role?

Let the answers flow – and appreciate the wisdom and insights your brain shares. I'm confident your brain will give you some direction and inkling about a next step you can take.

Visioning is a fun and creative way to think about your future. It removes the pressure of answering the question "What do I do next when I don't know the future?" and allows your higher self and inner wisdom to surface. It makes it easier to take baby steps toward the future you truly want.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you found today's episode intriguing and want to have a visioning session with me, please reach out. Email me at deb@debelbaum.com or schedule a complimentary consult through my website: debelbaum.com. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!