



# At Home Manual

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# Why Visualization

## WHY DOES VISUALIZATION WORK?

Visualization is one of the most effective tools to achieve goals, de-escalate, and restore physical and mental homeostasis. It can be done quickly and easily and does not require stillness or silence. It is a perfect fit for children and young adults because of their vivid imaginations and boundless energy. If you can create an image or scenario in your mind, you can change your emotional state, and your body does not know the difference between a vision and reality. When you are fully involved in a visualization, your brain and body cannot distinguish real from imaginary!

## WILL THIS WORK FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD?

There is not an age that visualization starts or stops being appropriate. Anyone can benefit from using visualization and the Happy Spots practice, even adults. This program specifically was created to make the highly-effective practice of visualization more accessible to young people. Younger children may appreciate the visualization chips (included) more, while older children and young adults may prefer to develop their own ideas. Each individual can make this program their own!

Empower your child to create the day they want

Support the achievement of goals, whether athletic, academic, performing arts, or personal -- pairing visualization with practice in the activity of choice positively impacts real-life performance

Help your child be more present and in touch with their emotions

Alleviate anxiety, depression, and the effects of trauma

Break the cycle of negative reactions and associations to specific activities, events, or people

## WHAT RESULTS WILL I SEE?

Your child will be notably calmer, happier, and more peaceful after doing the “spots.” If you are doing this to break behaviors or reactions to a specific situation, you should notice a difference within a couple of weeks, if not sooner. Initially, you may notice your child (or even you!) are resistant to doing the practice. You may even notice more resistance during times of stress and that is when this practice is most needed. This is because our brains get stuck in these negative patterns and do not want to change. That is why we build in time to celebrate at the end of the practice. Please know there is no right or wrong way to do this program. Do not get hung up on “Am I doing this right?!” Try to enjoy making this program your own and encourage your child to do the same.

## WHY SHOULD I DO THIS?

- Empowerment
- Resilience
- Emotional awareness
- Relieve anxiety, depression, and fear!
- To know there is another way to deal with stress
- Confidence
- Goal attainment
- Because YOU matter!

## How long will this take?

Each round will take about 10-15 minutes. You can aim to work up to 30 minutes a day by doing two rounds daily (back to back or broken up) if and when possible until you have achieved the desired results. Try making this part of your morning and bedtime routine. While we want this to become a new healthy habit, we do not want to be so rigid that children do not look forward to doing it. If they want to do more, they are certainly welcome. After years of practice, I still do a visualization at night before bed to help me unwind and support restful sleep or when I am trying to move toward a goal or before doing something I am less than confident about.

Consider the amount of time spent watching television, scrolling on social media, playing video games—and work with your child to build this into their day. It is time well spent! You can do this practice anywhere you would like. Do not feel like you have to have the perfect setup all the time. In general, it is helpful to have a quiet place away from distractions. This is not always possible, and that is okay!

## Why are we doing this?

1

The purpose of this practice is to embrace the imagination and energy young people naturally have to create new habits and reactions to events in life that previously may have caused them to get stuck in a cycle of negative emotions. The program helps children to acknowledge and accept their feelings and reactions while empowering them to embody elevated emotions. Over time they can decrease or eliminate negative associations. It improves their overall mood and confidence!

2

This is NOT a program that teaches children to avoid or run from the full spectrum of emotions we all have within us. It is important to accept the child’s emotional reactions and to help them understand they are valid. What we are aiming to do is help them break free of the negative emotions that can define them if the cycle perpetuates so that they can find their way back to joy and peace more easily.

3

The program encourages young people to elevate their thoughts and reach new potentials. While legitimately flying through the sky like an eagle or being a shooting star may not actually be possible, the emotions that come out of these visualizations will help them develop the confidence and state of mind to dream big. You can also help them develop visualization ideas that are possible, like creating their ideal vacation, taking care of their favorite animal, making the game-winning shot, or swimming with dolphins!

4

The program is simple and fun. You can join in and do it too. Let the child take you on a journey! I do visualizations daily with my family to start our day on the right foot and to help us wind down at the end of the day. It may feel strange until it becomes a habit, and then it is just fun!



# Down to the 2. Science

## THE SCIENCE OF VISUALIZATION

When we visualize an event, the same areas in the brain are activated as if it is really happening. Research shows that just imagining yourself using a muscle results in actual improved physical strength. (1)

Our reality begins in our minds. What you can hold in your mind, you can hold in your hand. Professional athletic coaches have been using visualization as a tool for many years to help athletes improve performance. Michael Phelps, Lindsey Vonn, Katie Ledecky, Greg Louganis, Muhammad Ali, Mary Lou Retton, Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, and many more famous athletes paired visualization with their training to master their sport. (2)

The benefits of visualization extend beyond the athletic arena. Albert Einstein, Walt Disney, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Oprah Winfrey, Will Smith, Jim Carrey, Sara Blakely (young self-made billionaire), and countless other legends all credit visualization to their success.

Not only is visualization great to calm and reset our brains, but it can propel us toward goal achievement and bring dreams into reality. Being realistic, we can not just visualize success in something without practicing in reality. We still need to take action in real life for visualization to be effective for goal achievement.

## YOUR TURN TO TRY

Close your eyes (after you read this) and visualize yourself eating a rich and creamy chocolate ice cream in a crispy sugar cone on a hot summer day. Taste the ice cream in your mouth, feel it drip down your hands as you sit under the hot summer sun. Try to pull in all your senses. Do you hear birds chirping? Can you feel and smell the cool grass beneath you? Most importantly, how do you FEEL? Feel that emotion, whether joy or calm, bursting from your heart and through your entire body. That is how we get our mind and body to believe it is really happening. If you visualize it, your brain thinks it is real and does not know the difference!

What is so valuable about this is that you can literally transport yourself within minutes to a place of joy and peace. Your brain can go from being on high alert to feeling as if you just returned from a relaxing vacation in paradise.

Visualization is an active form of meditation. We are guiding our brain to function the way we want. The brain can be trained to create new connections and pathways with practice. How amazing is that?! No matter your current state of mind or what you have been through, a fresh start awaits.

We activate the amygdala, a tiny and primitive part in the center of our brains, during visualization. Research supports that stress-provoking environmental stimuli set off anxiety. The amygdala reacts to these stimuli by entering the fight or flight mode(6). With prolonged stress, or if our brains get stuck in a negative experience, our amygdala can malfunction. Interestingly, the amygdala is highly active during the adolescent years and is prone to overactivation and malfunction during this period. This is a fantastic time to train the amygdala to function properly, building resilience and stability that will support adolescents during these trying years and beyond.

## Did you know?

Your amygdala (we have a set of 2) are just a couple of centimeters in the center of your brain but is the emotional control center of your brain!

Young people rely on their amygdala more than adults because their prefrontal cortex is not fully developed. That is why keeping it healthy and happy is so important!

# Benefits of Mental Rehearsal

There is a growing body of research supporting that mental rehearsal not only improves mood and self-confidence but also positively impacts our ability to successfully complete physical and mental tasks. (3, 4) Consider how this can apply to your child.

- 1 Creating the day they want through a morning warm-up
- 2 Relieving test and performance anxiety
- 3 Calming their mind before an athletic event or competition
- 4 Improving confidence
- 5 Enhancing mood

## WHAT ABOUT MEDITATION?

Meditation is an immensely valuable practice but those that are not experienced in the practice may find it challenging to connect with it in an emotionally charged state. Have you ever tried to get a child to meditate when they were very anxious, incredibly angry, or even when they were calm and happy? Visualization is often more effective at changing how the brain responds to a stimulus. Plus, getting a child to sit down and meditate sometimes seems like a punishment or chore to some children, while visualization is an invitation to daydream!



# 3. Making it a Lifestyle

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Set aside time each day for your child to do a visualization. Make it a family affair and have each member take turns leading a visualization! Strive for doing visualizations in the morning and evening to set your child up for a good day and help them wind down. With that goal, remember there is no right or wrong way.

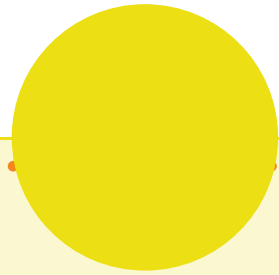
One of the best times for visualization practice is when your child is upset about something. This is when the brain is in its most changeable state. They may have difficulty doing it in the middle of a temper tantrum, but as soon as they are calm enough, this is a great practice to help them turn their day around and choose to have a good day.

One important note here is that your child (and you) will be most resistant to doing this when they need it most and when it would be most beneficial. The brain tends to get cozy when stuck in these negative emotional patterns and pathways and resists change. Try offering a reward after visualization to help encourage both of you. Their favorite treat or a special activity they love are great ideas. Try to stay away from technology as a reward if possible. **Your enthusiasm matters. If you are having fun, so will they!**

This is a departure from how they may have typically spent their free time, but it is up to us as parents to create a new normal. If we want to see change, it starts with us.

Encourage your family to embrace approaching life in a new way. If we want different results, we need to do life differently

Be the Change



## Using for prevention and lifestyle

Children want to do it all. They will plan 100 activities in a day if you let them. It is our society's way to have full days planned with back-to-back tasks and activities. Our children also naturally put pressure on themselves to be perfect at everything. It is important to encourage their effort, not the perfect result.

While Happy Spots focuses on rewiring the brain to function at its highest potential, the choices made outside of this practice do have an impact. As parents and professionals, we have heard about the consequences of too much technology for children, yet it can be hard to break away from it when it is everywhere—and let's face it, it is convenient.

For kids, anxiety, depression, and loneliness can be the result of too much screen time. A 2018 population-based study by Twenge and Campbell (8) showed that after an hour of screen time per day, "...increasing screen time was generally linked to progressively lower psychological well-being." They also noted, "High users of screens were also significantly more likely to have been diagnosed with anxiety or depression."

This also extends to screen time relating to texting and gaming, even if done with your child. According to a Psychology Today article by Victoria L. Dunckley M.D., "...many parents mistakenly believe that interactive screen-time—Internet or social media use, texting, emailing, and gaming—isn't harmful, especially compared to passive screen time like watching TV. In fact, interactive screen time is more likely to cause sleep, mood, and cognitive issues, because it's more likely to cause hyperarousal and compulsive use." In addition, too much social media time has been shown to result in low self-esteem and declining social skills.

## BE DIFFERENT

If we want a different result, we need to do something different. Leading your family to do an activity like Happy Spots is a departure from the norm, but consider the gift of empowerment this can provide to help them lead their best lives. It is well worth the inconvenience of approaching life differently! Once it becomes part of their routine, it will not be different. It will just be a fun part of the day.

One final note, you may need to practice patience as results are not always immediate, but they will be significant and worthwhile if you stick with the program!

## HOLDING ONTO HAPPY

Encourage your child to walk away from their happy spot visualization carrying the feeling they had during it with them throughout the day—as if it really happened! This is one of the most important tips: try to get them to keep that feeling alive as long as possible. Remind them of the feeling they had in their "happy spot" throughout the day.





# 4. Training & Time

## COMPONENTS

**Program Guide:** Guides are available for parents, professionals, and the self-led.

**Vision Chips:** Use these if your child is unsure what they want to visualize for the session. This should not be rigid, where they have to visualize the first thing they pick. They may want to look at a few before finding something that resonates with them. If having too many options becomes overwhelming for them, then narrow it down to the ones you discover they like best. Help them envision something uplifting but not anxiety-provoking (think floating through the sky vs. jumping off a cliff).

**Poly Spots:** These are helpful visual reminders of the steps during the visualization process, which can help the participant stay focused. They do not need to be used if your child needs to do a visualization on the fly to help de-escalate.

## IMPORTANCE OF PREPARATION

You will want to take some time walking your child through the steps and explain the “why” behind them and the program in general. Giving them background knowledge is the first step as they need to understand they have the power to create their own reality.

For reference, when I started my almost five-year-old with this program (you can do it this young, they just need more help), I wanted to see what would happen if I tried to guide her through it without much understanding of what we were doing. She recently had an emotional meltdown after her baby sister tore a picture she drew. It would have been a great time to do our spots, but she did not understand what we were doing, so it was ineffective. I also made up an affirmation (I AM statement) on my own that I thought would be empowering to her, but I lacked buy-in from her because she did not have a part in creating it. After I spent several days talking to her about what we were going to do, reading books about visualization, thinking of happy memories in detail, and involving her in creating I AM statements, she was ready to go and excited to get started! Now she requests to do the practice.

It is essential that your child has some ownership of this program and that you take some time to explain what you are doing and why.

# Timeline for Training

While learning the happy spots program participants will:

1. Develop a clear vision of the way they want to feel and create a corresponding affirmation
3. Practice living in the desired state of being through memories and visions of the future (Happy Spots)
4. Practice being mindful to maintain the desired state of being for as long as possible through the day and go back to it when they notice reverting back to the old undesirable emotions/thoughts/habits

This timeline is a recommended breakdown for how to learn the program. It can be adjusted based on the participants needs.

DAY  
1

## ACTIVITY

Show participants program components, read books about visualizing, mental imagery, and mindfulness. Recommended titles listed on page 50 or use your own favorite. Practice doing a visualization together (explanation on page 26 or choose your own)

## MATERIALS

Age appropriate books on visualization (page 50)  
Vision Chips (just to look at)  
Poly Spots (just to look at)

DAY  
2

## ACTIVITY

Present key teachings (page 19) , discuss familiar people that use visualization, mindfulness, or meditation to strengthen their mental health and reach goals. There is a list included, but you can also research this your own or have participants do the research.

Walk through the steps together (not pulling in actual I Am statements, Memories, or Happy Spots yet)

## MATERIALS

Vision Chips  
Poly Spots

DAY  
3

## ACTIVITY

Review the steps again, this time adding movement. Develop Memories (page 32). Model for the group by sharing a memory that incorporates emotion and sensory detail. If appropriate, project the writing of your memory as you are talking about it.

Have the participants develop 1-3 memories of their own. This is a perfect opportunity to have them discuss at home with family. Family members can help them to recall and incorporate senses and emotion while they write down their memories.

## MATERIALS

Vision Chips  
Poly Spots  
Participant Journal to record memories

DAY  
4

## ACTIVITY

Review all steps together with movement, develop “I AM” statements, pick out Happy Spot chips of interest and begin talking about them, incorporating senses and emotion. Participants can write out Happy Spots visualizations pulling in sensory details and emotion. They don’t always need to do this, but it is helpful initially as they are getting familiar with the activity.

## MATERIALS

Vision Chips  
Poly Spots  
Participant Journal to record Happy Spots (future visualizations)

DAY  
5

## ACTIVITY

Put it all together and try it out! Play inspiring music, have fun, try it out!

Tips: Have participants have their written I AM statement, memory, and happy spot nearby so they can glance at it if needed. Remind them to FEEL the emotions of their affirmation, memory and happy spot. If they are partnered, the partner can help remind them of what they chose.

## MATERIALS

Vision Chips  
Poly Spots  
Participant Journal

# STEP 1

## Introducing the Spots

DAYS 1 & 2

### AT THE BEGINING

Plan to read through each step or paraphrase to your participants to help them understand the program. At the beginning, you will want to take one to two sessions just discussing why you are doing this, getting the participant(s) excited, and walking them through the spots.

But first, give them some guidance on visualization by using books to help introduce the topic, followed by a practice visualization.

### CONNECT WITH THE SENSES

Talk with them about a memory of a special event, birthday, or holiday. Guide them to a memory with a positive charge and narrow the focus on one specific part—opening a birthday gift, waking up on Christmas morning, making the game-winning kick in soccer. Have them recall as much sensory information as possible (touch, taste, sound, sight, smell). Most importantly, have them recall the emotion they felt and see if they can bring that feeling back and really FEEL that emotion running through their body and in their heart.

### TAKE A READING BREAK

Reading books about visualization is a great way to build background knowledge, especially for younger children. There is a recommended list included in this guide, but you can also select any others that catch your eye.

# UNDERSTANDING OUR BRAIN POWER

 **Key teaching: You own your mind. It does not own you.**

You are not your mind. Your brain is an organ just like your heart that pumps your blood, and your lungs that allow you to breathe. Your brain allows you to move, function, and problem solve. The mind, where thought, emotion, and perception originate, resides in the brain and often controls the brain. The mind is always active and can get off track easily. You might sometimes get stuck in your mind, but it is important to know you are much more than this. The brain and mind within it function like a muscle, and you can train this duo how you want it to function, just like any other muscle in your body.

## What Can Get Our Brain Off Track?

1

FEAR

We can have a hard time moving on from something upsetting.

2

STRESS

A little is okay, but too much can make us go a little haywire and we need help getting back on track.

3

GENETICS

The way our brains behave might be similar to how our parents' brains behave.

4

TECHNOLOGY

Too much screen time, social media, etc., takes us away from the present moment and contributes to our brains getting stuck.

5

GIVING THE BRAIN

TOO MUCH POWER

Do not believe everything you think! Our brains run like a machine and can get stuck and sometimes need a tune-up.

## TRAINING THE BRAIN

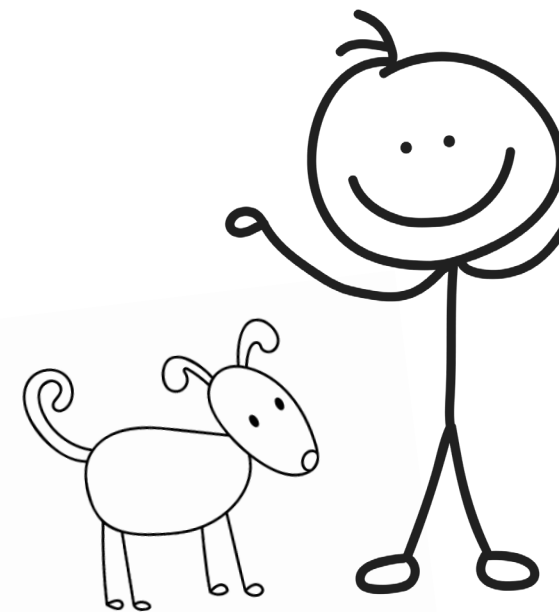
We are going to train our brain so that we can spend more time feeling happy and peaceful, which will also help us achieve anything we set our minds to. We are going to do this using visualization. When upsetting things happen, it is okay to feel angry, sad, or frustrated, but we are going to learn how to feel these emotions and get back to being happy and calm again instead of letting them ruin our day.

Similar to how a puppy needs training to know not to jump on people or go to the bathroom in the house, our brain also needs training to know how to be calm and happy.

We do not need to wait until something is upsetting to do this. Visualization can also be used to help you achieve goals in your life, no matter how big. If you have a goal, you can achieve it. It all starts in your mind!

## FINDING ROLE MODELS

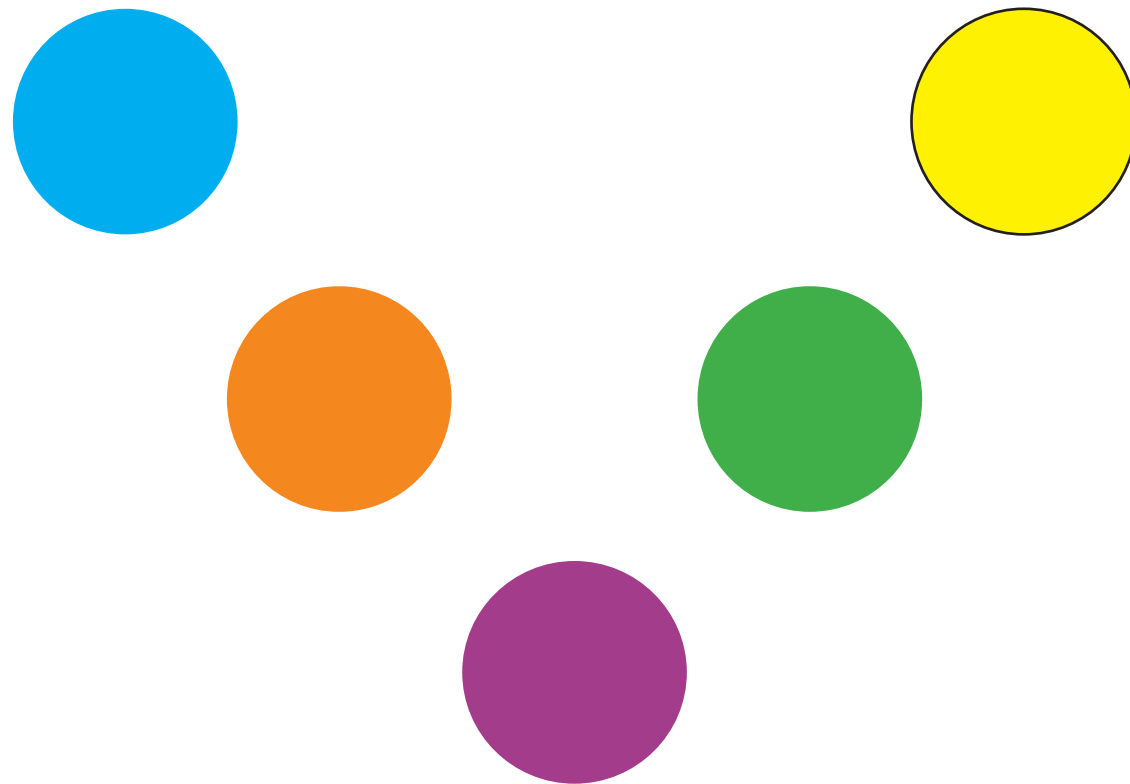
To help your child get excited, take some time to look up famous athletes/singers/performers they can relate to who use visualization as a tool. If they like to sing, look up singers that use visualization. If they like sports, try to find a professional athlete for their favorite sport. It will not be hard to find—there are so many legends that do this! People that use mindfulness or meditation count too as these practices are in the same family as visualization. Lists are provided in the Happy Spots kit.



## TIME TO DO THE SPOTS!

We want to familiarize the participant with doing their spots while they are relatively calm and can pay attention. If possible, go through this several times until they have gotten the hang of it.

Lay the poly spots down in a V shape. Spread out about two (child) steps apart in this order: Start, Reset, I AM, Memory, Happy Spot.



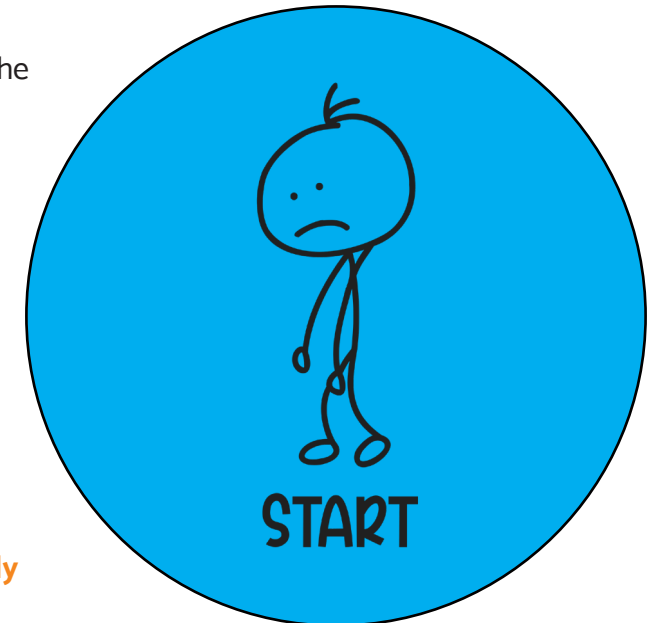
## THE START SPOT

 **Key Phrase: “Stop! I am ready to move on!”**

We start here when we are not feeling great and name the feeling we are experiencing.

If you are doing a practice run while they are calm, have them think of a time they were very upset or sad.

Allow them as long as necessary to really feel the emotion they are experiencing. How does it feel in your body? What thoughts do you notice that come along with that emotion? We don't want to run from or deny the emotion, so it is important to take your time here. We are accepting what we are feeling but will be making the choice to not allow it to define us or ruin our day. When they are ready, they can say **“Stop! I am ready to move on.”** and take a step to the next spot.



## WHY DO WE NEED THIS SPOT?

We want to make sure they know their emotions are valid and that it is okay to feel negative emotions. We just need to develop the tools to not get stuck there or let them take over our day.

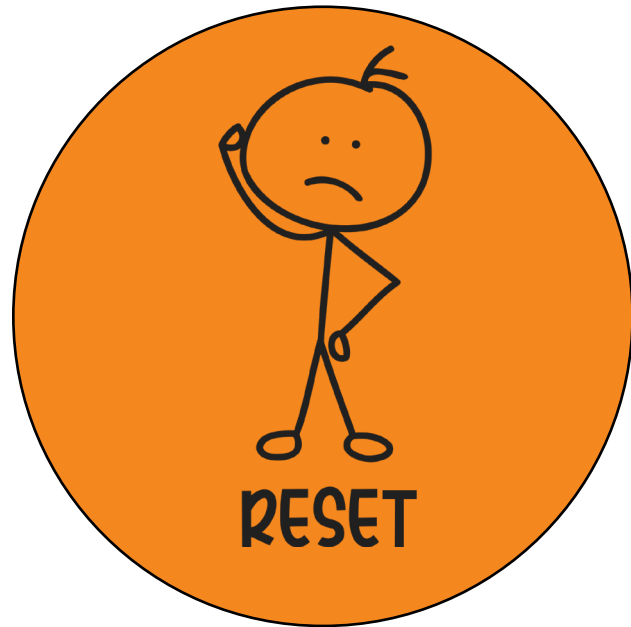
We don't want to stop self-care just because we are feeling good. Being proactive keeps us feeling good!

### Feeling Happy?

Alternately, if they are feeling good and doing the practice to help sustain positive emotions, they can notice and enjoy those positive feelings on this step, when stepping back to the reset spot (next) they can choose to hold on to the positive emotions. They don't need to say anything because we are not interrupting a cycle of negative emotions.

## THE RESET SPOT

 **Key Phrase: "My Brain Needs a Reset!"**



Step full on this spot and say, "I am feeling (emotion), and my brain needs a reset! I am choosing a different way!" Discuss emotion. give guidance for how to do this and identify the emotion

## WHY DO WE NEED THIS SPOT?

This gives them practice at naming their emotions (they may need help with this), so again, it is just something they are feeling, not who they are. Saying "my brain needs a reset" primes them for the next step. They have given their permission to make an emotional shift.

### Feeling Happy?

Alternately, if they are feeling good and doing the practice to help sustain positive emotions, they can name their emotion and say "I am feeling ... and I choose to hold on to this feeling!"

## THE I AM SPOT

 **Key Phrase: "I AM"**



Now we are going to come up with some words together to describe what makes you uniquely amazing and awesome and say them on this spot.

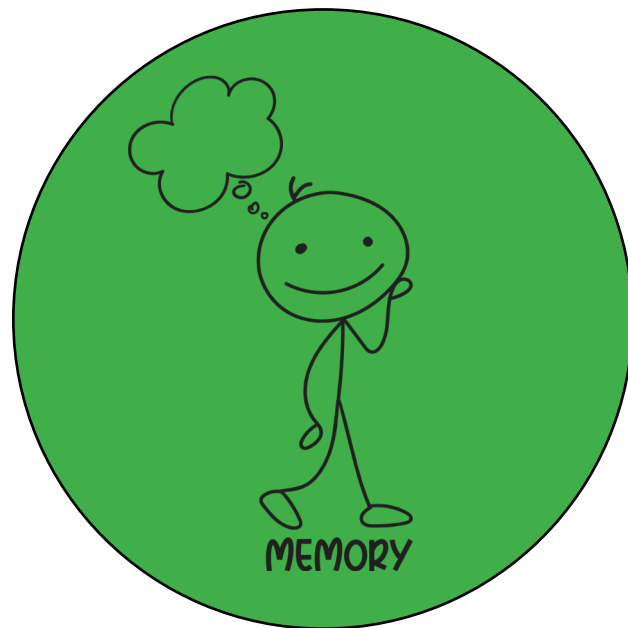
\*We will stay here for a few moments, really feeling our affirmation

Check out the word bank included in the back of this guide to get started or research some other statements.

## WHY DO WE NEED THIS SPOT?

Affirmations work! Children need to know they can choose what attributes they want to embody. Affirmations are easy reminders we can use throughout the day to help keep us on track. The trick to making them work is feeling and believing your I AM statement.

## THE MEMORY SPOT



On this spot, we are going to think of a memory that made you feel really happy or calm. We will want to remember every detail to make it feel like that event is happening all over again.

Stay here a few moments, as if frozen in time, feeling the positive emotions associated with that memory and take a few slow, deep breaths.

### WHY DO WE NEED THIS SPOT?

Reliving something pleasant that we are familiar with prepares us to pull in uplifting emotions that haven't happened yet in our Happy Spot.

## THE HAPPY SPOT



This is the coolest part. We are going to go to some amazing places in our minds, and it is going to be so much fun and so real that you will want to keep coming back here and have new adventures that will help us feel good for the rest of the day!

\*Again, stay here a few moments, feeling the emotions as if the event was actually happening and take a few slow, deep breaths.

### WHY DO WE NEED THIS SPOT?

If you think of something in complete detail, your body does not know the difference between a vivid thought and an actual event. This is where we can truly change our emotional state.

## Time to Celebrate!

After we complete the Happy Spots exercise, we get to celebrate, so let us come up with some celebration ideas together. Celebrations that work for others include dancing, listening to their favorite song, having a treat, choosing a fun activity.

# STEP 2

## Introducing Movement

DAY 3

### WHY ARE WE ADDING MOVEMENT?

Like previously, lay the poly spots down in a V shape. Spread out about two (child) steps apart in this order: Start, Reset, I AM, Memory, Happy Spot.

Today, we are going to incorporate movement into each spot. Why? While teaching, I was trained in a teaching practice called “Quantum Learning,”<sup>(5)</sup> which is based on neuroscience and encourages students to use movement, vocalization, and visual cues with what they are learning to better retain and apply information and increase engagement.

In Happy Spots, movement acts as an additional redirection to help with breaking the brain’s old bad habits. If we incorporate movement to the visual (the spots) and the auditory (speaking out loud throughout), along with the uplifting feelings we can train our brains faster, and it is more engaging. Children also love to move!

The movements below are a suggestion, but if you or your child want to do something else, that is fine too! Remember, they need to own this. The only guideline here is that the movement should be consistent every time.

Eventually, the brain will correlate hands in a stop signal to stepping away from the negative emotion, lightly pressing on the top of their head with preparing to calm and reset, arms in the air with empowerment, and a hug with a happy memory. Have them watch you move through the steps, and then they can join you before doing it on their own.

These steps are demonstrated on the website for you to reference. Let’s go through the steps again-this time adding movement!



# Meet the Happy Spots Movements

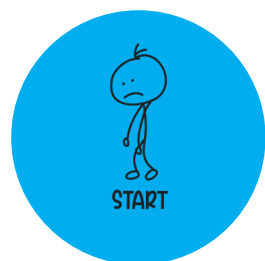
Start by reviewing each movement for the corresponding spot. Demonstrate the motion to the participant, and encourage them to mimic you. After you have practiced the movements, walk through the Happy Spots exercise combining Step 1 and Step 2.



## I AM SPOT

**Movement:** Put hands up in the air and stand with a confident posture.

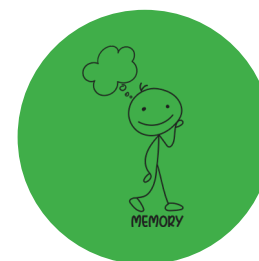
Now we are going to come up with some words together to describe what makes you uniquely amazing and awesome and say them on this spot. (You will actually pick an I AM statement in the next lesson, so do not worry about figuring it out yet. We are still just getting familiar with each step. If they would like they can just use a temporary filler like "I am Epic, I can do anything I set my mind to!")



## START SPOT

**Movement:** They can start with whatever they are feeling, whether it is stomping, arms crossed, hands balled up in fists, crying, or just standing and just feeling their emotion for a few moments.

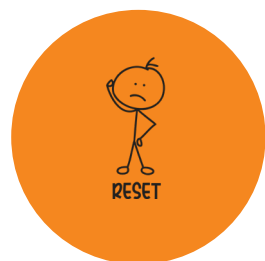
Then, put their hands out in a stop signal and say "Stop! I am ready to move on." Take a step back towards the Reset spot.



## MEMORY SPOT

**Movement:** Give themselves a gentle and comforting hug.

Fast-Track Option: If you need to squeeze in a quick round of Happy Spots, you can skip the memory step occasionally. It is recommended that you include this step as frequently as possible since it helps the participant connect to a positive emotion they have already experienced, making it easier to evoke an emotion in their "happy spot." Emotion is the most important component of this practice.



## RESET SPOT

**Movement:** Push gently on the top of head as if pressing a button.



## HAPPY SPOT

**Movement:** Any movement that corresponds to the visualization is appropriate but not needed. They can also just stand still, focus on their vision, and start bringing in their five senses.

This is where we are bringing them to their "happy spot," so encourage them to smile. The physical act of smiling tells our brains that all is well!

# STEP 3

## Memories & Reminders

DAY 3

### HOW TO DEVELOP A MEMORY "BANK"

Do this on the same day or during the next lesson/session if needed.

Recall several uplifting or comforting memories with your child. Encourage them to close their eyes and put themselves there again. Pull in as many senses as possible and practice actually feeling like that event is happening all over again. Talk through every detail out loud. Write your ideas down in the section at the end of this manual, or use your own journal. It may be helpful for you to model this first so they feel more comfortable trying it.

If necessary, make up a memory and develop fun and comforting details so that it seems real.

Memories to consider: vacation, birthday, holiday, pet, game, feeling relaxed in bed. Focus in on one moment of the event instead of the entire event (exp. Having friends/family sing happy birthday and blowing out the candles at their birthday celebration, instead of the entire birthday celebration from start to finish.)

- Select a small item they can keep in their pocket to represent and remind them of their happy spot. It can be a stone, crystal, piece of velvet, small toy, plushie etc.

Helpful Reminders



# STEP 4

## Developing Affirmations

DAY 4

### DEVELOP A POWER STATEMENT (“I AMs”)

Put the steps back on the ground and review them together.

Now go to the I AM step and let your child know that we will be coming up with some words to describe them today. We want to come up with words that make them feel strong and powerful, like a superhero!

Power statements, or affirmations, are encouraging words you can say over and over to yourself, and if you say them often and work hard to actually FEEL what you are saying, your mind and body will change and believe what you are telling it. They may feel silly at first but keep at it. Affirmations work, and they make us feel good!

When I was writing this program, I had to get past my self-consciousness to bring it to life. My I AM was: I am unlimited. I am abundant. I am a creator.

Whenever I said this affirmation, especially “I am a creator,” I felt powerful, alive, and purposeful. I said it as often as possible, both out loud and in my head. It propelled me forward to reach my goals and get around obstacles. That is what you are looking for in an affirmation.

You will likely need to guide your child on creating an effective affirmation. You likely already have insights into their insecurities, so start there. If you know that they struggle with anxiety and confidence, suggest, “I am calm. I am important. I can do anything I set my mind to.”

Reference the word bank that follows for ideas. 2-3 adjectives max so they can remember it.

## HOW TO SAY YOUR "I AM"

I AMs should make them feel powerful, happy, and unstoppable. Encourage them to say their statements with feeling and actually feel the emotion bursting from their heart!

I AMs should be in the present tense and start with "I am."

FEELING AND BELIEVING in your I AM statement is the key to making it effective. Suggest a change if you notice the statement is losing power.

## GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

If they are able, have them write their affirmation 10 times each day. Make it fun by using different pens or trying different handwriting styles, stencils, or artsy paper. Everyone should say their I AM statement out loud throughout the day as often as possible.

## EXAMPLES

I am calm, smart, and capable.

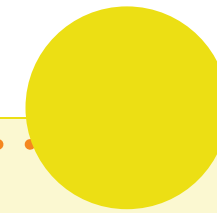
I am relaxed and can handle anything that comes my way.

I am healthy, happy, and strong.

I am unique, free to be myself, and loved.

I love myself. I am kind and loving to everyone around me.

I am beautiful. I am smart. I love my mind and body.



## I AM/Power Statement Word Bank

Mindful	Courageous	Brave	Respected
Confident	Beautiful	Driven	Creative
Safe	Empowered	Renewed	Resilient
Strong	Dedicated	Fierce	Loving
Thankful	Adventurous	Tenacious	Artistic
Respectful	Free	Radiant	Genius
Important	Worthy	Wealthy	Intelligent
Determined	Unstoppable	Innovative	Compassionate
Honest	Unlimited	Radiant	Smart
Happy	Abundant	Purposeful	Healthy
Positive	Passionate	Effortless	Joyful
Caring	Powerful	Effective	Capable
Calm	Effortless	Helpful	
Unique	Epic	Leader	



# STEP 5

## Introducing Visualization Chips

DAY 4

### USING THE CHIPS

Put the steps back on the ground and review them together. Recall the I AM statement they selected previously and point out where they will say that while doing their spots. Introduce the “Happy Spot” as the place where they will get to go and do anything they can imagine, and it is going to be awesome!

A set of chips with visualization ideas have been included to help get you started. Go through the chips together, pick out a few of interest, and spend some time describing what that experience would be like. Get silly, get dramatic, and try to use all five senses, or as many as possible! If they are able, and interested, they can come up with some of their own happy spot ideas too.

Once they get the hang of doing the “spots,” try to create a list of visualizations more personal to them that they can choose from or do a mix of both. It is essential that whatever visualization is selected is meaningful and exciting to them. Even if there is a specific one they really love, try to switch it up every few times so that they do not get bored.

Our goal is to develop visualizations that make them FEEL something. Remember, if we feel it, our bodies do not know the difference! We also want to think of things that match our desired state of being. If they are anxious, what would make them feel calm? If they are sad, what would bring them joy?

My five-year-old’s preferred happy spot is meeting her favorite animated characters in real life. They just so happen to be a cloud and a cupcake, so we can easily have fun adventures with them using our senses. We also do more realistic ones like having a wonderful experience and feeling confident at an upcoming ballet recital (something that would normally cause anxiety). This has greatly reduced her previously significant anticipatory anxiety.

- Here are a few questions to ask to help brainstorm some of your own custom visualization ideas.
- What makes you feel excited?
- What have you always wanted to do?
- Where have you always wanted to go?

Customize Your List





# STEP 6

## Identifying Causes

DAY 5

### IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES

Are there known causes of distress where you want to use visualization as a tool for redirection? If so, consider setting the practice up so that it immediately follows a known cause of distress. Doing so will help the brain to develop a new, positive association with it. Anytime someone is having a meltdown or shutting down in response to something, is a perfect time to do a visualization.

If causes of distress are more random, start documenting events, times, and what activities are distressing to them so that you can set up a Happy Spots practice around that activity.

If you are having difficulty scheduling the practice at the same time they are upset, and they are calm when practicing Happy Spots, have them remember a recent occurrence of when they were angry/sad/scared/anxious (whatever the most concerning behavior is) and have them really think hard about one of those instances and how it made them feel.

### DOING HAPPY SPOTS WHILE IN A HEIGHTENED STATE

The brain is most plastic (in a changeable state) when it is heightened. It is easier to make new neural connections (and break those you do not want) when doing a Happy Spots practice in this state. You can certainly do it while calm to help them remain that way or even help them become more relaxed (it is great before bedtime or a stressful event). But if you are looking to change a response to a stimulus/event/activity, try doing Happy Spots when they feel more sensitive. Be aware that you may see some pushback initially (or all the time) until you get into a groove.

Our minds have patterns and follow familiar pathways they are comfortable with, even if they are not pleasant. The brain also is attracted to more negative states. I can tell you after many years of doing visualization myself, and absolutely loving the practice and results, my brain is still resistant to doing it when I need it most, like after a stressful event. However, I push through that and feel fantastic afterward. It truly is like hitting a reset button! Your group is fortunate to have you motivate and encourage them to do their “spots” when they need it most.

For each practice, place the poly spots on the ground in a “V” in this order: Start, Reset, I AM, Memory, Happy Spot.

Try to do it twice in a row! For the second round, when they go back to the start, have them try to remember the negative emotion they started off with and then go from there. This is a great practice to recall how they were feeling and identify the emotion after they are slightly less attached to it, and then go back to their “happy spot” again!

**Helpful Tips**

- Remember to help your child use all their senses in the Memory and Happy Spot and think of something that supports the desired state of being. You would not want to be racing on a roller coaster if you were trying to be calm. Encourage them to describe the experience out loud and truly FEEL what it would be like to be having this experience. They can move and sing—it is their dream!

## Additional Resources &

# 9. ACTIVITIES

## TRADITIONAL VISION BOARD

### MATERIALS

Poster Board (If making multiple, you'll need several)  
Magazines of Interest (Sports, Travel, Leisure)  
Photos  
Glue

### ACTIVITY

For the program to be most effective and remain interesting, work with your group to create a vision board to inspire them and help them create pictures in their minds. Place the vision board in a prominent spot to remind the participant to keep their elevated emotion going and inspire them to live each day like their dreams have already come true. What would that feel like for them? Once they find that feeling, we want to keep going back to it again and again. That is the key to success!

## DIGITAL VISION BOARD

### MATERIALS

Device with Internet Access  
Access to Personal Picture Files  
Canva and Pinterest Access

### ACTIVITY

Collect pictures from Pinterest, personal, or the internet that represent your ideal future. Use Canva or another site that allows you to design picture collages. Upload into a photo collage and save as a screensaver on your cell phone or laptop. Encourage participants to look at this daily and really feel the emotions as if that future was already here!

## PRACTICE TO GET OUTSIDE OF YOUR HEAD

For a great daily practice to help with the concept of “you are not your mind,” close your eyes and focus on the tip of your nose. Can you feel the space or air around your nose? Now breathe slowly and deeply. Follow it as you breathe in and out, focusing on the space around your body.

## GRATITUDE LIST

While not all young people fully understand what gratitude means, they usually understand how to list good things they are thankful for in their lives. Try this at the end of your session or before they head home for the day and practice what it feels like to be grateful.

## ADDITIONAL TRAINING SUPPORT

Be sure to visit [happyspots.info](http://happyspots.info) to access our included pre-recorded training videos.

Additional training is available to support implementation. We especially recommend these sessions for first time users and professionals. We can help make tweaks based on specific cases, while also giving you the guidance you may need.

### IN-PERSON INITIAL AND FOLLOW UP TRAINING

Additional training is available to support implementation. We especially recommend these sessions for first time users and professionals. We can help make tweaks based on specific cases, while also giving you the guidance you may need.

### ONE-ON-ONE COACHING

Additional training is available to support implementation. We especially recommend these sessions for first time users and professionals. We can help make tweaks based on specific cases, while also giving you the guidance you may need.

### GROUP TRAINING EVENETS

Additional training is available to support implementation. We especially recommend these sessions for first time users and professionals. We can help make tweaks based on specific cases, while also giving you the guidance you may need.



## CHILDREN'S BOOKS

1. A Little Peaceful SPOT: A Story About Mindfulness Paperback – September 23, 2019 by Diane Alber
2. Happy: A Beginner's Book of Mindfulness Hardcover – April 21, 2020 by Nicola Edwards
3. Zen Pig: The Art of Gratitude Paperback – March 30, 2020 by Mark Brown
4. Because – March 5, 2019 by Mo Willems
5. Your Fantastic Elastic Brain: A Growth Mindset Book for Kids to Stretch and Shape Their Brains Hardcover – December 13, 2010 by JoAnn Deak Ph.D.
6. The Spot – By Your Friend Abby (an Etsy book)
7. What's My Superpower? – June 1, 2017 by Aviaq Johnston
8. I Am, I Can: 365 Affirmations for Kids– August 11, 2020 by Wynne Kinder
9. What Should Danny Do? (The Power to Choose Series)– May 1, 2017 by Adir Levy
10. Wild Mindfulness - May 1, 2019 by Laura Larson
11. I Can Do Hard Things: Mindful Affirmations for Kids Paperback – September 11, 2018
12. I Am Peace: A Book of Mindfulness (I Am Books) Hardcover – Picture Book, September 26, 2017 by Susan Verde, Peter H. Reynolds
13. Listening to My Body by Gabi Garcia
14. My Brain is a Thinking Machine by Candice T. Aguirre
15. Crab and Whale – February 26, 2018 by Mark Pallis, Christiane Kerr
16. A Handful of Quiet: Happiness in Four Pebbles Hardcover – September 13, 2008 by Thich Nhat Hanh
17. Mindful Movements by Thich Nhat Hanh
18. (I Am Picture Books) By Peter Reynolds and Susan Verde-Books on Mindfulness
19. I Am Peace
20. I Am Love
21. I Am Human
22. I AM Courage
23. I Am Yoga

## BOOKS FOR YOUNG ADULTS & ADVANCED READERS

1. The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle
2. As a Man Thinketh by James Allen
3. The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success: A Practical Guide to the Fulfillment of Your Dreams
4. You Can Heal Your Life by Louise Hay
5. Psycho-Cybernetics, A New Way to Get More Living Out of Life by Maxwell Maltz
6. Finding Your Own North by Martha Beck



## THE FOLLOWING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL STANDARDS (SEL) ARE ADDRESSED

1A.1a. Recognize and accurately label emotions and how they are linked to behavior.

1A.2a. Describe a range of emotions and the situations that cause them.

1A.3a. Analyze factors that create stress or motivate successful performance.

1A.4a. Analyze how thoughts and emotions affect decision making and responsible behavior.

1A.5a. Evaluate how expressing one's emotions in different situations affects others. A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.

1A.1b. Demonstrate control of impulsive behavior.

1A.2b. Describe and demonstrate ways to express emotions in a socially acceptable manner.

1A.3b. Apply strategies to manage stress and to motivate successful performance.

1A.4b. Generate ways to develop more positive attitudes.

1A.5b. Evaluate how expressing more positive attitudes influences others.

## MEET THE AUTHOR

I am a former educator that is passionate about helping youth develop healthier habits that support mental and emotional well-being leading to lives of limitless potential and resilience. I spent my childhood avoiding challenging or anxiety-provoking situations as I lacked the tools to cope properly.

As a young adult, I developed a pattern of spiraling into severe anxiety every time I had a significant life adjustment like a new job, relationship, or a move. While therapists suggested self-care activities and meditation, I always felt too busy or that it did not apply to me or would not work for me.

After having my first child, I went into a state of postpartum anxiety and depression that left me unable to work or properly care for my child. It was devastating, to say the least. With my body being in such a sensitive state, I experienced an adverse reaction to the countless medications I tried. So I went on a long and bumpy journey to find an alternative method to find stability so I could be the mother, wife, and woman I so desperately wanted to be, and knew I could be.

I spent two years experimenting with every modality you could imagine, along with every natural supplement under the sun, with limited success until I stumbled across visualization. I heard a few success stories, and it was enough for me to really apply myself and give it a try. Within one month, my anxiety and depression lifted, I could sleep soundly and look at the outside world again without feeling fear or a disconnect. I went on to have another child and had a peaceful and gratifying postpartum experience thanks to visualization.

While the results took time, I have learned that all the quick fixes our society turns to do not offer lasting results or true change. I am grateful to all of the parents, therapists, coaches, and doctors who are implementing Happy Spots to empower young people to care for themselves and reach for their wildest dreams.



## Citations

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