

Language as Opportunity, Words as Images

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Fania Chazen is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, graduate of NYU, certified in Interactive Guided ImagerySM by AGI and trained in hypnosis. Fania uses GI as a powerful clinical tool in private and group sessions, lectures and

workshops with diverse populations. Since moving to Israel with her family, Fania has translated and narrated Belleruth Naparstek's "Relaxation and Wellness" Guided Imagery CD in Hebrew. She practices in her private clinic "Lev Shalem (Whole Heart)" in Tel Aviv, and is a therapist at the Integrative Medicine (MindBody) Unit of Davidoff Center for Cancer Care and Research, Rabin Medical Center. Fania believes that the process of continuous reclaiming of one's Wholesome Self is a major path to one's Health, and it can be done in many ways.

Pathway to Freedom



By Randy Kasper
LCSW, BCD

Addiction is, in short, enslavement. One's world spirals downward until all of one's thoughts and actions revolve around the object of desire. Many approaches are used in service to freeing people from this virtual prison. Popular nowadays are cognitive and behavior-based interventions. Much attention is also given to debates on the role of genetics in the study of addiction. This is all well and good. In fact, I spend considerable time teaching these approaches to graduate and postgraduate level students. However, it is important to recognize that these approaches are primarily linear and logical and therefore limited.

Mental Imagery is, in short, a pathway to freedom in that Imagination is expansive and unlimited. Offering us ideas, thoughts, feelings and options for behaviors that were previously elusive, Imagery is rife with Opportunities to discover, through our senses, new options and experiences. Imagery shows us "what is," bypassing the tricks and rationalizations of our intellect and ego. The Imaged picture (or taste or smell or touch) informs us of what is going on in our inner world. The Mental Imagery pathway empowers us to connect with our true self, the self that is elusive when one is affected by addictions, obsessions and compulsions.

Working with the concept that "Beliefs Create Experience," we know that if someone is suffering addiction, there is a false belief at

the helm. How do we know this? We know because our true self always leads us to healing...period. Suffering is the result of false beliefs. We use Imagery in part to discover belief. Using a short guided Imagery exercise, we start from the point of pain, and then we change the Image, thereby changing the belief and changing the experience. Imagery is belief "concretized" as mind pictures.

I have found it very important to use the frame of "false beliefs" when working with clients, because people suffering with addiction are plagued by guilt and shame. When we shift to discovering their inner worlds and inner wisdom, a weight seems to lift from their shoulders. Imagery is a work-form that has no place for judgment. I work with my clients in a phenomenological way. We look at "what is," not what "should be." And always—we work with "What Does the Client Want?" Always ask this question, whether in service to yourself or others. Always start with "What is your intention?"

I use short guided Images to make quick corrections, and longer forms to discover elements of the client's inner consciousness. In creating short guided Image exercises, I will often use Dr. G. Epstein's books. I will also listen closely to the specifics of a client's language to create Imagery exercises during the session. For example, people commonly

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report feeling “weighted down.” An exercise that I might create will go as follows: “Breathe out three times. What is the weight? The size? The shape? Where is it on/in the body? Breathe out two times. With your breath and any tools that you may find at your disposal (remember – all things are possible in the Imagination), lift, shatter, dissolve the weight. Breathe out one time. Knowing that you are free from this weight, open your eyes.” I will often have clients create fires, then water the ashes and see new forms of growth. In addition to the obvious transformative component, it brings in the elements of air, water, fire and earth. This simple exercise is liberating in (at least) two ways: By using the client’s language, I am respecting them. This is important when working with addictions, since so much shame is involved. It is also liberating in that the Imagery experience itself shifts the client away from habitual, false beliefs. By

the way, it can also be unpredictable and therefore fun. Laughing with (“with” is the important part!) clients is highly underrated – in the right context, humor is a wonderful indicator that a new level of freedom has been reached. Longer Imagery or waking dream exercises are used for explorations. I would use these more after a period of sobriety.

Here are two exercises that you might try. The first is from Dr G. Epstein’s book *Healing Visualizations: Creating Health Through Imagery*. While it is intended as an anxiety reliever, I have found that it is useful for addictions, compulsions and obsessions:

1. The Mummy

Close your eyes, breathe out three times, and see yourself as a mummy wrapped in bandages. Remove the bandages, roll them into a ball, and throw it away. Breathe out once and find a cave. Go deep into it and find your own sarcophagus (mummy tomb). Go into the coffin and lie there, again as a mummy wrapped in bandages. Remove the bandages, knowing that your anxiety has left you. Then leave the coffin, come out

of the cave, see the blue sky, and open your eyes.

2. Crossing the Bridge

Close your eyes and breathe out 3 times. See yourself crossing backwards over a bridge. Say goodbye to the substances you have abused and the people with whom you have used. When you reach the other side, blow up the bridge between now and the past. Breathe out one time. Turn around and see your new shore. You can examine this new place as you wish. See what is here. Open your eyes knowing that you have found something important in your life.

In closing, the imprisonment of addiction has little to do with intellectual capacity or logic. It speaks to other parts of us, some of which are accessible via language and linear thinking, some of which are not. And this is where Imagery comes in. It offers us the Opportunity to connect with our inner wisdom. Some might even call it divine wisdom. It bypasses denial and conventional logic, both of which are enormous obstacles on the road to sobriety. Imagery reminds us that we are indeed the authors of our lives and offers us the tools and the Opportunity to write masterpieces!

Randy has been working with Imagery for twenty years and is Director of the American Institute for Mental Imagery West Coast. Randy has been the Director of three comprehensive addiction programs in NY and Houston, Texas. She was one of the first to oversee the Complementary Modalities Committee for Beth Israel Medical Center, NYC. While maintaining a private practice in Southern California, Randy serves on the PsyD faculty for Alliant University, San Diego and at Calstate Dominguez Hills. Recently she collaborated with her Forensic Psychologist husband on training programs that aim to safeguard vulnerable populations.