



BEST GIG VISUALIZATION EXERCISE

Reading & Worksheet

You write a song, you know that it's perfect, and maybe it even moves you to tears. You feel it. You feel the power. The emotion grabs you. You're swept away. It's powerful. It's magical. It's the whole reason you and your life are bound up in music.

You're in your room, playing it, recording it, feeling it. All the way.

In this moment you know you have something infinitely valuable, infinitely worthy. There's no doubt, there's no second-guessing. There's only knowing. Knowing that this is who you are, this is all that's important. This is the source of all meaning.

Knowing that this is your purpose and that you cannot fail.

And after a while, the moment passes. But it still drives you on. And you're going to bring what you've created to the world. To make it understood. And the world is going to recognize it for what it is. Grand. Great. The source of all wonder.

And so you do. You get up on stage. You bring it to the people. You share it.

But this attempt to share, it's like a teen-aged boy trying to make conversation with the most popular girl in school. It's a hyper-sensitive, incomprehending, wide-eyed step into the unknown, and through some trick of expectation and perception and self-doubt and uncertainty bred-in-the-bone, it becomes mangled and misinterpreted, twisted and hardened and *socialized*, until it's hardly recognizable.

That first confusion... And it goes downhill from there. Until you get lost somewhere. It goes from sharing to trying to be impressive. It goes from sharing to having to justify everything by making money with it. It goes from sharing to maybe what else should I try and accomplish in my life? Where else can I find meaning, because this sure isn't working...

But what is this experience of the artist anyway? Is it normal? I mean, how are we to know? What about having a car like the neighbours, owning a house, saving for retirement, having a respectable job title or just plain old contributing to society in a meaningful way? What about all the wonderful things our childhood friends are doing? What about all the BS? It seems to be working for everyone else...

We artists, we know better than that. Well, the fact is, we don't know better, we wonder about ourselves, we suffer, all that BS crowds us out...

And all that time, the only thing that's ever really going on, is us finding our way back to a perfect moment and learning how to share it.



And it's also the experience of those few, perfect moments that happen along the way, as if by accident, that help make sense of everything.

It's this awareness of the best moments and the music that must merge. And when they do, anything is possible, and with a little practice, everything comes true.

Why do the Best Gig Visualization?

This exercise is going to take you BACK. We're going to recover that person who is you that didn't know any better. That person you were before you learned to despair you would ever be a rockstar.

Just like top athletes and successful businesspeople do, it's imperative that you work on your mindset and the deep-seated emotions that guide what's going through your head when you think about your music career. Your mental state is huge determinant of whether you will win. It's hugely important if you're going to consistently take actions and move forward.

And we're addressing this in the program here because it's so fundamental to your success.

I'm not going to get into endless reams of theory and rationale and all that, I'm going to ask you to take real action here and participate in real experiences here that are going to impact you and change you, so you get lasting benefit and value.

Maybe you've heard this story before.... A few years ago now, I got a band together, set up a gig, and invited everyone I knew for my big launch. Why?

Well, I'd quit a job it took me 3 years to get, I'd told everybody I was going to be a rockstar, but I realized I'd still never played my own real gig.

How could I believe I was going to be a rockstar if I hadn't even played a real gig?

Family members travelled to be there. My new girlfriend was there. More than 30 friends showed up in the downtown eastside of Vancouver on a Tuesday night.

My band and I had practiced about 5 times, my amp was grounded wrong and the mic shocked my lip all through the first song.

Musically, in terms of tightness, we sucked. Midway through the playlist I found myself just wanting to get to the end. I wasn't present at all. I was a deer in the headlights. And it was a disaster, and it happened in front of everyone I knew.

I writhed in agony for days afterwards, horrified at the shame of it all.

What did I think I was going to achieve with this one gig? But the damage was done.



In fact, it affected me for years to come. It was only with this exercise that I finally defeated the effects of that gig. Now I'm sharing it with you.

Everything you've done up to now has prepared you for this. Are you ready?

This exercise will benefit you immediately, but it's also something that you can do again and again as needed.

You'll be empowered to take action in your music career and connect powerfully with your audience and you'll also boost your presence. So let's dive right in.

What is the Best Gig Visualization?

- Feel the feeling of your best moment while envisioning the context of your most disappointing gig.

The first time I did this exercise, it just sort of happened, spontaneously. The idea came to me simply as an inspiration, so far as I know. I'd gone for a walk down to the Ottawa river, and just sitting down on the grass and looking at the rapids, I closed my eyes and shortly thereafter got the idea and spontaneously performed this, just because it occurred to me to be a good idea somehow at the time... an inspiration I guess... and once completed, I felt the impact of the experience viscerally. I knew I'd been changed by it. I could feel it in my physical body. I was "back". It was real and practical and effectual and an experience that was personally my own. And so it was very convincing... [and based on that experience which was personally my own, I explored further into the world of visualization and meditation.]

It was not until a year later that I learned that I had in fact followed a scientifically proven process without even knowing it. And because I had that experience for myself first, and felt its effects, and knew it had changed me, and in fact led to the best gig I'd ever had, when I happened to come across that process again and again described in different ways by well-known scientists and authors, I became a student and, through personal experience, a believer.

Some call this process envisioning, or visualization. It is central to tons of classic books on empowerment and it is the most powerful way to learn again in a satisfying way what you agreed to learn in a disappointing way in the past.

What you're going to do in this exercise essentially is feel the feeling of your *best* moment while envisioning the context of your *most disappointing* gig.



Why does it work?

- What you feel and think and experience, real or imagined, your subconscious accepts as reality.
- The greater the intensity of the feeling associated with an event, real or imagined, the greater its impact on you.

What you feel and think and experience, real or imagined, your subconscious accepts as reality. The greater the intensity of the feeling associated with an event, real or imagined, the greater the imprint on your subconscious, the greater its impact on you.

Over time, what you learn from experiences takes the form of complex thoughts, that is, thoughts that are dependent on one another - an acceptance of cause and effect that forms the basis for your beliefs. Before long you don't have to consciously make the connections anymore. They are assumed. Your beliefs become the thought castle in which you live. In this way, your subconscious ultimately feeds you back what you have allowed to be imprinted upon it.

Of course, most of your life you haven't consciously allowed anything to be imprinted upon your subconscious. Nevertheless it has happened. Along the way, you've accepted truths handed down from your parents, you've accepted truths handed down from society, and once you accepted those truths, that *learning*, mostly in exchange for love and acceptance, these formed the basis for how you have perceived and interpreted and experienced the world. You can call it cultural conditioning, or just conditioning. Some call it the conditioned mind.

And your conditioning, your belief system working in the background, manifests as patterns of thought, automatic thought reactions that emerge in your mind in given situations throughout your day. From a certain perspective, you could say that while you've had a completely unique set of experiences, and a unique combination of thoughts, most of your thoughts are not your own!

Your imagination is powerful. When you think of a beautiful setting, or a fond memory, or even something horrible, you can have a physiological reaction – that is, changes will happen in your body depending on what you are thinking of. You may become anxious, or relaxed, your breathing may pick up or slow down.

At Hallowe'en one year there was this game where you had to put your hand in a covered box that was labeled 'witches fingers' and another that was labeled 'eyeball stew'. When you put your hand in, you couldn't help but physically recoil at the feel of what was in the box. Your imagination suggested one thing and your body believed it, despite the fact that the witches fingers were just warmed up pickles and the eyeball stew was just ordinary boiled eggs and pickled onions in warm water.

Your body will even *record* emotional experiences you've had and play them back to you – ever found yourself replaying a particularly dramatic scene from a movie in your mind days or even months later?



- **You've developed thought patterns associated with music; You're subject to involuntary thought reactions associated with music that arise from your subconscious.**
- **Your biggest problem right now is that music is associated with both feelings of love and feelings of fear; You're compelled to both seek it and to seek to avoid it at the same time.**

Your thought patterns associated with music are all based on experiences that happened in your past. Past events and influences that aren't even happening in the present! If you pause to notice your thoughts and feelings now and then during the day, you can identify these as they come up.

Judgements about whether music is worth doing, how you should feel guilty for wanting to be a musician, how it's not a respectable profession, how you'll never amount to anything, how everything you write isn't good enough, how nobody is paying attention to you when you play, how you'll never make any money at it, how nobody will want to be with you if you dedicate your life to music, how you're too old to play music, how you can't have a family and go on tour, how you feel and what you think about yourself when you see the posters of other musicians up around town, and more.

Part of your brain's job is to filter the information you receive from your 5 senses so you are not overwhelmed and can make quick decisions, and it does this by referring to your already-formed beliefs. In other words, it decides what is relevant based on your existing beliefs formed from old experiences. So as you get older it gets harder to have a new experience of an old activity. According to Joe Dispenza, neurologist, by the age of 35, 95% of the thoughts you have on a given day are the same thoughts you had the day before. You expect the experience to turn out a certain way and your brain allows in the information that confirms what you expect, and filters out the other information. For example, because of what they believe about music and their own music, a lot of musicians notice only the people who are not paying attention when they get up on stage and can't really hear or don't meaningfully acknowledge all the compliments they get.

- **There's more to you than your brain.**
- **At your core you're pure positive energy.**

Luckily there's a lot more to you than just these aspects of your brain. You are more than just your brain. The best moments of your life happened when you got in touch with the greater reality of your being. And when the pure positive energy at your core emerged these were the most memorable and impacting moments of your life. The source of all dreams is also your source. This energy is the creative energy. When you're at odds with yourself, when your brain is at odds with the insistent call of a deeper knowing, when the database of your past experiences isn't serving you, you have to bypass it, you have to write new code, you've got to find a way



to add new experiences to the mix. Metaphorically speaking, it is time for the tree that is you to put its energy into a new branch.

- **When you 'own the feeling', you can consciously choose to create new thought patterns and beliefs and let the ones that aren't serving you fade.**
- **The key is to start with a shift in your feelings and your thoughts, and then follow this up with action.**

To do this, you have to seek out the energy that is at your core. Elevated emotion, such as when you experienced your best moments, is the experience of this energy. It makes new, powerful impressions on your subconscious. It's the energy of creativity, expanded consciousness, and of transformation.

In this exercise, you're going to access this energy and impress your subconscious with a new belief-forming experience using visualization.

Theoretically, the same results could also be accomplished directly through action. With practiced familiarity on stage, and by designing a show you know cannot fail to please your audience, you could theoretically get up on stage with authority and have a rewarding experience that you want to repeat. Over time, you could reverse all your negative feelings and limiting thoughts and beliefs about performing and ultimately manage to bring the sort of emotion and presence on stage that will win your audience.

But because a large part of your body and your mind are working against you, dragging you down with negative and limiting thoughts, feelings, and expectations, based on powerful influences and events that happened in the past, it's extremely difficult to start with action.

In fact, some experts believe it's virtually impossible.

After all, you've *known* what you've had to do all along, but you haven't done it...

Instead, the key is to start with a shift in your feelings and your thoughts, and then *follow this up* with action. And de facto, become willing to learn as you go. Shift your feelings and your thoughts and action is sure to follow!

In this way your repeated actions will help you get good at what you want to be doing (rather than what you're already bored with doing on your day job) and you'll learn it both faster and better.



- **Re-experience your most disappointing gig in a space of utter freedom from judgement; taking that leap, in the present, open to connection.**

So what we're going to do is feel the feeling of your best moment and expand it and amplify it while envisioning the context of the most disappointing gig you've ever had.

It's a good idea to choose the context of a gig you've already had because it'll be easier to envision the setting - including the stage, the room, the crowd, the ambience, and how it looks, smells, sounds, tastes, and feels. It's something from your experience and therefore more real to you. In fact, it *is* real to you (not least in how it lives on in your mind in the present). I recommend choosing the most disappointing gig you've ever had because it's likely the source of powerful negative emotions that are still impacting you and holding you back. You need to challenge and clear out these negative emotions. You need to be free from the physical and psychological effects of these emotions. You need to break their hold on you. You need to re-experience that event from a space of non-judgement, in a space of utter freedom from judgement - taking that leap, in the present, open to connection.

You can also choose to feel the feeling of your best moment while envisioning the context of your ideal gig - the gig you've always dreamed of having. For example, in front of a huge crowd at an outdoor festival. Your ideal gig is what you ultimately want, so this is the direction in which this exercise should evolve for you.

- **Until you do this, you will continue to experience the sense of conflict and the frustration that comes with being at odds with yourself.**
- **This one exercise almost guarantees that in the near future you will have the best gig you've ever had.**

Until you do this, you'll continue to experience the sense of conflict and the frustration that comes with being at odds with yourself. Until you do this, you will continue to delay, procrastinate, hum haw, and generally avoid doing what you've always dreamed of doing.

Rather than unconsciously pushing away the activity most associated with your dream, you'll open yourself to experiencing it again and again.

This is an extremely powerful exercise and depending on the intensity of the emotions you are clearing, you may even have a physical reaction after completing it.

Personally, the day after I did this I got the shingles! The shingles is just the adult form of the chicken pox. I got red spots around my waist that were itchy and sore for awhile, but then they went away. Harmless.

Don't worry about this. Just do the exercise.

Because this one exercise almost guarantees that in the near future you'll have the best gig you've ever had.



After all, *everything* you experience is both created and interpreted through the lens of your mind. Whether or not the truth of this is apparent to you now, it's a powerful awareness you will gradually gain the more time you spend in the present moment.

How to do the Best Gig Visualization

So... what I'm going to do next is show you exactly how to do this.

- **Write a paragraph describing the most disappointing gig you've ever had.**
- **Draw a rough sketch of it.**
- **Put a big X through the sketch, tear it up, or burn it – or all three.**

To start, I want you to get out a pen and paper and just think about the most disappointing gig you've ever had. Even if it wasn't super disappointing, that's ok. Get past that funny feeling in your belly, just force yourself to go back there and face up to it. Face up to what happened. Write a paragraph describing it in all its gory detail. What made that gig so disappointing? Tell the whole story. Who was there? What went wrong? What did you want to happen that didn't happen? Keep going until you've got it all down, you've gotten it all out of your system, until it's all there in black and white.

Once you're done, draw a rough sketch of it or even a really good sketch if you're good at drawing. You can draw the stage with you on it, the lights, the audience, the windows, the venue as it appears from the street, as you like, whatever detail occurs to you, whatever most symbolizes the pain you've suffered.

And once you've done your sketch, be sure to put a big X through it, or tear it into a million pieces or take a match and burn it... or all three!

- **Sit comfortably.**
- **Relax.**
- **Become aware of your breathing. Extend the exhale so that it is longer than the inhale.**
- **Let an image of unconditional love enter your mind.**
- **Singers – relax your tongue, jaw, neck, and shoulders as you normally would.**

Make sure you're comfortable. You may want to sit on a cushion so you're tilting slightly forward. You definitely have to sit up and not slouch. Your hands can be face up or face down on your knees or with your fingers together, as you like. In sum, feel free to sit in a classic meditation pose.



Before you do anything, you need to relax. You won't be able to do this effectively if you're not at ease, if you're all wound up worrying about what you are going to eat for dinner, if your strings need changing, or if the global food supply is going to run out.

Be sure choose a relaxing setting. For example, you may want to choose a room that's not too brightly lit. (The first time I did this I was sitting on the grass in a park on the bank of a river.) And pick your moment so you have lots of time for this and you're at ease. You don't want to feel rushed – be sure you have all the time you need.

Once seated, become aware of your breathing. Pay attention to the inhale, feel and hear the air enter your body through your nose, feel the slight pause before the exhale and then feel and hear the air leaving your body through your mouth. Consciously adjust your breathing so that your exhale is longer than your inhale. For example, you can count to 3 as you breathe in through your nose, and then when it's time to exhale, purse your lips to slow it down a bit. This way you can count to 7 as you breathe out through your mouth. After a few breaths, you may find that your inhales extend to a count of 4 or 5 and your exhales extend to a count of 8 or 9, with a pause in between. Do this for a minute or two and you will be more relaxed.

Then, close your eyes and let an image of caring for or being cared for enter your mind, even if just for a split second. Hold it for longer if you like. For example you could imagine a boy playing with his dog, or a grandfather holding a baby, or two lovers at the park holding hands. Something like that. Just imagine anything like that and you will quickly find that you have become relaxed. You can also imagine the face of someone who has shown you unconditional love.

If you're a singer, you can also relax your tongue, jaw, neck, and shoulders like you normally do and of course, this will also relax your mind and body in the usual way that it does.

Just relax with your eyes closed and try not to think of anything for awhile - just noticing the feeling of your breath or the sounds happening around you, concentrating on one sound at a time.

- **Imagine the context of your most disappointing gig**
- **Then, imagine the details invoking all 5 senses. The venue. The people. Your view from the stage.**
- **You can see out from your own eyes in 1st person or see yourself from any angle in the 3rd person, whatever works best for you.**

Think again about the worst or most disappointing gig you've ever had. See that venue in your mind.



Then, imagine the details invoking all 5 senses. The venue. The people. Your view from the stage. You can see out from your own eyes in 1st person or see yourself in 3rd person. Take your time with this. Just one detail at a time. The stage - what does it look like? Can you see the floorboards? What does it feel like under your feet? What does it sound like as you move across it? See the gear on stage. Are there monitors and speakers? Where is your amp located? Where is the microphone located? What is the lighting like at the venue? Are there stage lights? What does it smell like? Can you smell stale beer and sweat? Perfume? What is the seating like at the venue? Are people seated in chairs at tables or in rows like at a theatre or a stadium? Or does this gig take place at an outdoor festival? Do you have props on stage or a banner or other signature items to create ambiance? What are you wearing? What instrument are you playing? Is there a band on stage with you? Go over your playlist in your head.

What do you feel like as you take the stage and look out at the crowd? Nervous? Distracted? Unfocused? Out-of-body?

Feel the cage of the microphone against your lips, or the pic between your fingers. Look out at the crowd. Can you see the faces of the people? Can you see into the eyes of the people? Can you hear their voices? Do you know some of those people? Can you see that person in the very back left corner? Can you feel their presence?

Now hear the sound of your guitar and your voice in the mic. You're telling the audience your name. You're welcoming the audience to the show. And now you're playing one of your songs. Your favourite song.

- **Feel your Best Moment**
- **Let the feeling wash over you.**
- **Share the feeling with the people in the crowd.**
- **Amplify it, magnify it, intensify it. Keep it strong for as long as you can.**

Now, feel the feeling of the best moment of your life. Really feel it. Go back for a moment to the episode in your life when you felt that best moment feeling most intensely.

See those people, look into their eyes, each individual and the audience as a whole, and feel this amazing best moment, there at your gig. Let the feeling wash over you. This is the one and only opportunity you'll ever have to be with that audience; you know you'll never see any of these people ever again, all of you, sharing that moment together right now, in this way, and you want to know who everyone is. Who they really are. You look out and you see each person's innocent, hopeful, dreaming self. Free of judgement, free of self-consciousness, full of genuine interest, curiosity, love. Everyone just wants to be who they are to share it with everyone. Let the feeling get bigger. Build it up more and more.

You're sharing this feeling with the people in the crowd. You're sending it out and they are sending it back! Powerful waves of emotion pour out from you and ripple through the crowd and they return magnified,



doubled, then tripled, then quadrupled, 10X in size. It is intense and wonderful. So powerful. Remarkable. It's bigger than you. It's staggering. Awe-inspiring. Almost overwhelming. Make it bigger. Amplify it, magnify it, intensify it. Let it wash over you again and again. Lift your hands in the air if you feel like it. Cry out. Keep it strong for as long as you can.

Now the audience is standing and singing your song with you! You're loving them and they're loving you. There's wonder on the faces. When the song comes to an end you receive a thunderous standing ovation. There's one emotion in the room and it's blowing the roof off the building. It's sending shivers up your spine. You bow your head in humble appreciation.

- **Take a moment to consider the truth of this role.**
- **Pay attention to your feeling-response and just be with it for awhile.**
- **Then, very gently, shift. Be OK with it.**

You're the focal point for the emotion in the room, and, it goes beyond you. You're celebrating something bigger with the audience. You've been willing to acknowledge it and to share it all the way and the people in the audience have come along with you. Take a moment to imagine the truth of this role. Realize that this is who you are. How does it feel? A little bit scary? Be with that feeling, just be with it for awhile, accept it, and then, very gently... shift. Be OK with it. Attach no judgement to it. Just be OK with it. Feel natural about it. Assume this identity. This is who you are. Realize this truth.

- **Little by little, let the feeling subside.**
- **You can do this exercise again and again.**
- **The more you do it, the sooner you bring that best gig you've ever had to everyone around you.**

Little by little, let the feeling subside, but know that it is always with you.

You can do this exercise as often as you like. But start by doing it once.

I know you can do it. Do this and know that you've just turned around your entire music career.

You can do this. You can do this anytime. And the more you do it, the sooner you bring that best gig you've ever had to everyone around you.