

WINNING HABITS BY B.P.BAM

Chapter 2: Worship Excellence

Our default mind nature is lack of focus. However, for being successful, ability to focus and defocus at will is very important.

Through Yoga, we can identify and remove bad habits and cultivate good habits.

You do well in what you love to do. Accepting a challenge also leads you to goal.

Fretting over past and worrying about future are worst habits and cause misery.

According to Yoga, if you worship excellence and keep your focus on it, it gets transmitted into you. Then you need not worry about earning a livelihood at all, for prosperity is bound to follow excellence.

Chapter 3: Goal Setting and Planning

Goals must be very realistic and stated in clear terms. All the stages must be worked out and described in lucid terms. Writing goals down in a special diary is important.

Analyse about your present capability, and how you can develop it further to achieve the goals must be clearly written.

Long term goals should be finalized before short term ones. Fix time frame for each stage of the journey. Time is the most critical factor. Break up goals into intervals.

It is not enough to just practice, mock even experience is also very important. Some skills get tested here only. Plan practice events.

Just strength and stamina are not important, focus and brain work drains lot of energy. Fatigue is a serious problem. It saps strength and ability, and causes indecision. Hence, it is important to develop skill, strength, stamina, energy reserves. During exams, these get used up and must be replenished later.

Peak form and fitness should be around the main event (exam, competition). Body is a part of nature and has a rhythm, exertion and rest.

Enough time for rest, relaxation and diversions are essential, otherwise mind gets stale and bored.

Chapter 4: Self Image and Confidence

More than skill, good self-image most vital. It is your impression about your capacities. It puts an absolute limit on your achievement. If it is not good, nothing can help.

Develop faith in improved capacity. Don't focus on mistakes or repeat/discuss failures. Moreover, never justify failures by seeking excuses. Success does not require any justification and failure has none.

Self-image: Faith in yourself and what you focus from the past and how you expect to meet the challenges in future. It is a comfort zone of performance, and acts like a governor.

Focus on your excellence: Reinforce in memory verbal talk and visualization again and again. Then you develop courage to face challenges in future. Visualizing the self, handling the challenges in future with confidence is a great help.

Self-image can be improved by controlling both verbal and nonverbal thoughts through self-talk and visualization.

Chapter 5: Self-Talk: Controlling Verbal Thoughts

All actions originate in mind. Good/Bad experiences are stored in the memory. To optimise performance we must train to control verbal thoughts and responses to them

In the thought process words are important, particularly the ones in which we have faith. If an expert describes our experience, faith is established.

Repeated listening to mistakes (other's or ours) makes our subconscious feel that this is what you want, and repeats them. To counter this, we need to use faith words to build us up.

Well-developed self-talk protects self-image. Doubts about our ability can arise any time. Immediately counter it strongly by saying that you can handle the situation to the best of your ability.

Yoga helps in overcoming doubts.

Learn from mistakes, don't ignore them. But discuss these with only known positive people. Discuss improvement, and emphasize the positive. After analysis, visualization session it is important to find out the right technique for best performance.

Read scriptures, offer prayers and recite mantras. Read good books, listen to audios and view videos.

Avoid mind chatter with something positive like mantra/bhajan while dwelling on the meaning of the words.

Recounting experience is almost as good as the real one. Describe it in totality with all details of the surroundings etc.

Talk about the positive experience to others. Writing it down in details in a special diary.

Writing the diary of excellence, affirmations, prayers, and mantras are elements of good self-talk.

Chapter 6: Visualization-Controlling nonverbal thoughts

Uncontrolled mind can go into past or future and draws inferences through visualization. Exercising choice of focus is very important. This can be done through regular practice.

Normal universal habit is to dwell on mistakes, flaws, failures, or all negative things of the past, present and future. Curb it with strong will and regular practice, otherwise it leads to misery. To counter this practice dwelling on the best from the past for purification of memory and positive self-talk. Draw proper inferences. Creating images of successful journey to goal and their actual realization is a great help.

Visualization can initially be done with words. However, doing it without them creates deeper impressions.

Imagine a role model doing a job, then replace him by you in visualization. Shooter imagines hole in the target (bull's eye) and rehearses mentally what to do to achieve it. Runners/swimmers visualize race from beginning to end.

When we have a choice of seeing movies, why not choose good ones.

Memory Purification: Remember best from the past repeatedly. It improves your skill. Repeated physical practice results in muscle memory of the skill. Visualize the correct action. Yoga helps in this.

Going into past and future must be at your will, for learning and planning respectively.

Controlled visualizing of future is called Sankalpa. Default, uncontrolled one is Vikalpa. Counter it with relentless positive thoughts.

It has been proved through studies that visualization effect is as good as that of actual practice. You may not be able to do the latter frequently, but the former can be done anywhere, anytime.

Relaxation is a must before visualization session. Pranayam and meditation help in this.

Visualize familiar objects vividly first. Then other multiple objects, venue, equipment, familiar persons. Bring all senses separately and then together. Familiarity of the venue is most essential. It puts you in a comfort zone. Inner power feels safe, and results in easy flow of skill.

Have repeated visualization of performance with poise and focus. Visualize appreciation of performance by well-wishers. This reinforces drive to excel and win.

Visualize achievement of long and short term goals. It sends clear signals for inner power for direction of efforts. The nearest short term goal should be visualized more often. It builds faith.

Chapter 8: Concentration and Focus

Cultivate the art of sharp attention- focus and living in the moment and produce correct responses. Focus on easy breathing.

Most stress is because of visiting bad memories and damaged self-image due to which you imagine bad future.

Breath exercise keeps you rooted to the moment and breaks this vicious cycle. It helps in improved concentration and improved self-image. Self-talk is also essential.

Use cue words and phrases as props to enter into deep concentration.

Practice focussing on stationary objects and then on dynamic events.

Dedication, drive, faith in your capacities and proper mood is very important.

Use deep breathing the moment loss of focus occurs.

Chapter 9: Relaxation, Rest and Letting Go

Confident person's muscles don't have unnecessary tensions. Skill of using only required tension, in required group of muscles, for required time. Then relax them.

Confident persons are relaxed. Tension and fear go together.

Fear of failure leads to tension and exhaustion. This affects decision making and performance.

Repeated practice and match rehearsal is to do it action with minimum effort.

Strength and stamina are required for correct response. Energy reserves must also be preserved near the exam/competition.

Relaxation is an art which can be developed through practice.

Mind gets tired due to frequent memory excursions to the past and future. Mind must also relax. Continued mental activity leads to anxiety and affects physical relaxation.

During actual performance also relaxation is important. You must use optimal energy. Whatever part of body, and mind is not being used must relax. Then, after the event, relax the used muscles.

Jaw and shoulder muscles tense up unnecessarily. Learn to relax.

Sleep best for relaxation. Builds up lost reserves and removes fatigue. Mind must stop while sleeping. Before sleeping light walks, swim, massage, shower, walking in a dark room for few paces, very light snack, glass of warm milk are good for a good sleep.

Must avoid watching TV, reading book just before sleep.

Shavasana, Yoga Nidra, Nyasa are best for relaxation. Positive self-talk, visualizing good in past and future also helps in relaxing.

Chapter 10: Coping with Distractions and Adversities

Toughest part is to be to keep away from them. We admire successful persons but are unaware of their hard work and sacrifices.

After recovering from cancer, long distance cycle race Lance Armstrong won 'Tour de France', the most gruelling cycle race 7 times.

Real challenge is to stay away from what you like (unimportant/harmful) and do what you don't like (important).

We have multiple roles in life, balancing all these roles is important. Do this as per their importance. Imbalance leads to distractions.

We have many desires, suppressed desires do a tremendous harm. Weaken them instead. Mind training and self-talk regularly is important. Take inspiration from heroes. Will power most is a very important magnet. It can be strengthened by discipline of following schedules and strictly guiding thought process.

Adverse conditions, challenges will suddenly come. Things go wrong. Avoid waiting for better time, or becoming negative. They weaken you.

Winners never quit, and quitters never win. No excuses for poor performance.

You can't be successful if you can perform only under good conditions. Do your best under all circumstances.

Chanadogya Upanishad provides following mental balance practice against adversities.

Forgive. No criticism/acceptance of all seasons/weather/circumstances. Don't condemn others for not rising up to your expectations. Try to imagine being in their shoes.

Improve yourself, don't expect the world to improve. No bitterness.

People adore a performer, not a whiner.

Chapter 11: Thoughts, Emotions and Moods

Thoughts, moods and emotions are very important and affect our performance.

Too much focus on results is strong distraction. Keep sharp focus on the present moment and do your best.

Obstacles: Physical and mental sickness, lethargy, doubt, neglect of work, laziness, inability to control the distraction of insatiable desires.

Solution: Practice focussing on a single element (mindfulness). Focus on breath is the easiest. It keeps you in the present moment.

Habit of remaining in the present moment at will is the key. Winning is just a habit.

Watch your thoughts. Be careful about what you read, hear, and think.

Focus in minute details of skills required. Read about them, seek expert guidance, and experiment in practice sessions. See what suits you best.

Feel sorry for the mistakes, not sad. Feel angry, but forgive. Don't lose control. Always look for improving skill. Keep improvising.

You choose your profession. So, you should enjoy and not suffer.

Working for reward, and recognition lowers ability.

Do not have any jealousy, and negativity. Have fraternity with others. Focus on their excellence. Good interpersonal relations are important.

Yoga method: Feel happy for other's happiness. Compassion for their sorrows, joy in their merit and achievements and ignore their sins and mistakes.

Mood very strongly affected by fatigue and loss of energy reserves. Just breathe out and hold breath for a while. The next breath is automatically deeper and faster. Mood immediately improves.

Pranayama (deep breathing): Conscious emptying of lungs removes tension and recharges energy and improves confidence.

Meditation on the past good performance is very helpful. It uplifts mood for a fight back. Similarly, visualizing past performances of role models has a similar effect. An experience of joy in any field also helps in improving mood and will power.

Emotions of anger, sorrow and fear drive away strength. Frustration, depression result and debilitate you.

Will to perform and curiosity about future help. Compassion and forgiveness help in mood control.

Chapter 14: Stress, Anxiety and Motivation

Past experience not always adequate to meet all future challenges. Failures in the past haunt you, making you anxious resulting in stress and energy loss.

All stress is not bad and can't be overcome totally. Routine work never stresses you because inner power knows how to handle it automatically.

Deep interest and feeling of challenge important. Anxiety is OK but should not lead to worry. Then fear starts.

Yoga: Factors leading to stress and misery should be found out by proper analysis, as early as possible. Then, these can be removed easily. If it has become a habit, it can be removed by choice of focus and meditating on objects or events selected for focus.

Ignorance, wrong notions, sensual pleasures, detesting unpleasant experiences are the root causes of stress and misery.

Always make the best effort and have present moment focus. It is an excellent remedy for stress and anxiety. Soham chant with breathing is better for focus and stress reduction.

If something external troubles you mentally, write down details of problem by visualization. Put it in a box (imagine) and promise to attend to it after a major job in hand.

Rejection in love, loss of a dear one can affect motivation tremendously. Future job insecurity also reduces motivation.

Playing is an excellent diversion for many problems. Get inspired by others who have faced many challenges.

Develop commitment to resolve to excel. Keep reinforcing commitment by convincing self talk. Love your profession, but challenges as well.

Winning Habits: Part II

Chapter 16: Self-Talk

Self-talk helps in developing focus, regaining focus, confidence building, handling adversities and distractions, and in mood improvement.

Diary of Your Past Excellence: Include thoughts which help in improvement in respect of the above qualities. Write down on loose sheets so that you can make changes whenever required.

3 Parts of Diary:

1st Part: Past best performance. Best for improved self-image. It is something like bio-data in which you present the best things about yourself. Anything that brings you happiness from your past performance, or thoughts. Write down any praise, appreciation, rewards received.

When you read these sheets again, it is very helpful because the inner power gets positive message to repeat these.

2nd Part: Blank Sheets on which you include tips for improvement from any source. Whenever you come across any motivating thing, jot down immediately.

3rd Part: Write Goals very clearly. Ultimate goals, phases, short term ones.

Write your commitments, planned efforts and sacrifices. Write in details about what, why, and how? Write expected feelings when you achieve the goals. Read this part of the diary often. This should be initially detailed, and alter on in crisp, point wise form.

There should not be any negative entries. If a fault is noticed, write how to overcome.

Japa: Mantra Chanting

It can be any spiritual mantra like OM, or a catch word or phrase.

It is best for controlling thoughts and improving concentration. Then it helps to control moods and attitudes. It is however, important to have faith in the mantra. While chanting, concentrate on the meaning of the words.

Describe in words your fight back from a losing position. Reciting this activates the process again. What has worked in the past for you can work again.

Mantras for avoiding distractions: Reading commitment, and choice of focus on goals.

Never say “I am going to win or do well”. Instead, focus on the problem, or theory you are reading. Affirm “Calm down” or “Be alert”.

For better team work: Ignore other’s mistakes and say “I forgive you. I love you. I respect you”.

Sankalpa” Prayer and Commitment

Strengthen positive imagination (Sankalpa) that you are going to complete the task. Remain involved in positive thoughts about the future.

For the above, recitation of Shanti mantra is a must at the beginning and end. It involves 1st commitment to remain calm and 2nd, prayer to God to help in creating peace around you.

Utterance of Sankalpa: What you are going to do, why and how. It directs faculties towards fulfilment.

Prepare a statement of your commitment to excellence and then pray for its success. Read it as often as possible with focus on the meaning. Positive visualization is implicit in both.

Take a sheet: Write the date and event for which you are preparing, and the Sankalpa statement. Explain why it is important. It shows drive, urge, and interest. Also, describe efforts and sacrifices you will make for the above.

Convince yourself that you have capability (quality and skill) to excel in the event. Mention hard work and expert guidance. Then write the challenges you may face. Write the focus and confidence with which you will face them, and finally your focus, commitment and attitude required till it is over.

Describe how you will feel when you perform with confidence and focus. Explain how you will respond to challenges and sustain attitude and mood throughout.

Finally, write about how others would appreciate your performance and its implication. This is very important. Visualize video flashback of how you feel after doing well after the event/result.

Read this diary again and again as many times every day. This is your daily prayer. Focus on meaning. Mood and attitude build up due to this.

The process of preparing Sankalpa starts a chain reaction of positive thoughts. Daily prayer about it is a reminder to your commitment.

Chapter 17: Visualization: Improvement of Self-Image

Reliving the Best in the Past:

Memory is a gift, but can become a curse if negative things are remembered. However, remembering negative things is our default nature. Inner power thinks that you want it and repeats the same.

Mistakes may be silly for which you can't forgive yourself. Others also may criticise and remind you. Then, you forget the best things done.

Taking charge of memory and dwelling on the past brilliance is the most important thing, although very difficult. However, it is essential for improvement.

Basic idea is to convince yourself that you can do a given thing, and do it well. Previous chapter explained self-talk, diary of excellence, mantras and catch phrases for this purpose. Visualization is a more advanced method than the verbal one. For visualization faith is a must. Faith in your own experience is easy.

Shift focus from negative to the positive. Must never forget positive experiences even if these are few. Strengthen them with focus, verbalize in the diary and then visualize. Then improvements begin. Have a hawk eye for anything good in your performance. When you notice them, write in diary immediately and then visualize repeatedly.

Every day, write the best things done in the day and visualize in minute details vividly.

Visualizing clearly is difficult.

Yoga says that you can know the thought process of the person by watching his actions. Focus strongly on Champions actions.

Visualizing the best in the past is like a spiritual experience. For a normal person, the best is in his profession.

Develop a habit of cues to respond positively.

Physical and mental warm up is essential before a major event.

Use other field experiences to develop visualization capability. Anything from spiritual, beautiful nature is OK. However, dynamic video visualization is better than a static photo.

Visualizing the Future:

This part is most difficult but important. We always prepare for the future. Past completely known, but future is completely unknown.

Sankalpa: Visualizing only good future.

Use known cues from the venue, material etc. Visualize signals at the venue. Then visualize that you are doing your best, feel it. You can visualize the things you deal with, but the main focus is on your response, technique and how you handle the transition points.

Development of will power strengthens the resolve.

Power to know and observe: Focus on what's happening.

Power to Act: Correct decisions and implementation. It involves perfect sequence and coordination.

Practice and actual event situations have differences, but it is important to imagine actual flow of responses.

Visualize a sharp focus, perfect poise and easy flow of skill in future events. This is best for confidence and good for self-image.

Visualization is a meditation technique. Star persons do it naturally. Although it is difficult, this skill can be learned. Don't hurry with this. Master it with regular practice.

Daily Exercise for Beginners: Follow the audio instructions. You can record them in your own voice or that of a well-wisher/coach. Then try to follow the instructions and try to bring images in the mind. If initially, the images do not appear, don't worry. Just focus on words and meaning. Mind then starts to visualize, although you may not be aware of it.

Exercise:

1. Sit in a straight backed chair, and keep your spine straight.
2. Relax the whole body. Feel the weight of the body on the chair and feet on the ground.
3. Focus on the breathing, and include the nerve centre at the top of the head in focus. Visualize it sending the messages of total relaxation all over the body. Feel the tensions and fatigue in your system disappearing.
4. Remember the best that you have done in the recent past(up to 3 weeks)
5. Select one such event and visualize it in minute details.
6. Visualize your focus and poise in the skill flow. Focus on how you were focussing on the relevant signals, and how skill was flowing naturally.

7. Feel the joy of achievement you felt. Visualize the appreciation that you got from friends and well-wishers.
8. Come to the present moment by focussing on the breathing again. Do deep breathing for 2 minutes.
9. Visualize yourself at the venue of the next event/practice session.
10. Identify all the signals there and get familiar.
11. Visualize warming up mentally and physically.
12. Visualize commencement of the session.
13. Observe yourself performing at your best with same focus and poise as in the past event or even much better.
14. Visualize completing the event to your satisfaction, and remain in the same focus and mood for some more time.
15. Visualize the natural consequence of your excellence like praise, pat on the back by a well-wisher/relative/coach.
16. Visualize receiving a beautiful bouquet of flowers as a gift. Enjoy the touch, fragrance and beauty of the flowers and their arrangement.
17. Focus on your breathing again. Do deep breathing for a minute. Open eyes and slowly go into a full body stretch.

Circle of Excellence:

This is one of the best packages for visualization. Some modifications are possible. Commentary is given. If you can't visualize, use it as a self-talk, keeping focus on the meaning of words. Slowly, visualization skills would develop with wonderful results. Can be done, anywhere, anytime, while waiting, in the bus or train.

1. Sit comfortably and focus on breathing. Include head nerve centre at the top and visualize it sending relax messages all over the body. Feel the fatigue, and tension disappearing. This is very essential for visualization. Doing it after Shavasana/ Yoga Nidra/Nyasa is very beneficial.
2. Mentally draw a large circle in front of you of the colour of your choice. Your choice of colour is important.
3. Place in the circle all the qualities that you require to excel in the event you are training for. Think in advance about these qualities. Analyse and discuss with the coach. Imagine these qualities as perfumes.
4. Mentally, step ahead in the circle and visualize all these qualities coming into your system and forming part of your personality. Visualizing your best well-wisher(parent/coach) placing hand on your head/ (shoulder if he is a friend) confirming that you have got these qualities. This conviction of getting these qualities is very important.
5. Mentally step back out of the circle of excellence. Visualize yourself in the event you are preparing for and identify signals there, familiarising them. Pick up a signal with which you will get confidence of all qualities in the circle. Being available to you in abundance. Be careful in selecting a signal. It should be visible during the event to bring focus back.
6. Mentally step ahead and stand in the circle once again. Visualize being in the situation again and calibrate the signal. See yourself observing it and performing at your best in perfect poise and focus. Make sure to visualize the beginning, middle, and end parts of the event. Visualize as many things there as you can and how you are doing well. Visualize results also. Visualize remaining fully focussed on the technique and performing with courage and confidence. Picture yourself observing your favourite signal off and on and feel the surge of confidence and deep focus.
7. Visualize good finish of the event. Feel the joy of excellence and appreciation from others.

Important: maintain same depth of focus for some time after the vent is over. Do in practice also. This avoids losing the group towards the end. Visualize successful completion and your and others reaction to it.

Chapter 18: Improving Attention Focus

Pran Dharana, Soham Chant and Prnayama

Continuous breath is a permanent link with the present and life. Brings fresh energy and removes waste. Must make use of it. Empty lungs fully.

Being conscious of breath is Pran Dharana. It brings you in the present moment, and begin concentration. All challenges are in the present.

Chant 'So' while breathing in and 'ham' while breathing out. Chanting this mentally works wonders. Soham means "I am the universal energy". Chant with understanding the meaning. Improves concentration, confidence and energy.

Amrit Prananyama is simple to do. It provides long, healthy life and builds energy reserves. Do it preferably in the morning, otherwise, in the evening.

Procedure: Take deep breath 3 times. Then begin this Pranayama cycle by chanting 8 times Hari Om while breathing in. Keep stomach relaxed. The chant 'Hari Om' 16 times while breathing out, while pulling stomach in. This is 1 cycle. Repeat 50-100 times. It takes 10-20 minutes.

Alternative Prnayama of Kapalbhathi or Anulom Vilom are also good.

Tongue Lock and Trataka:

For a short while, tongue is kept such that it does not touch any part inside the mouth. It helps immensely in improving focus. For phases involving movement, press the reverse tip of the tongue against the palate. Best is to keep it hanging.

Trataka is gazing continuously at a selected object. It improves concentration immensely. Thoughts also must be focussed on the object.

However, Trataka can only be done by those who practice Prnanyama regularly. 1-5 minutes time is enough for this. Initially, start with Bindu Trataka or Idol Trataka.

Caution: Don't do it for long periods. You also must be physically fit and fresh to do it. Do it in a dimly lit room. Morning time is best, otherwise, do it in the evening. Do it after lying in Shavasana for 5-10 minutes and at least a couple of hours before sleep.

Important: After every exercise, splash water 3-4 times over eyes.

Bindu Trataka: On a double full scape size paper, stick a 3" black paper circle in the centre. Fix it on a card board on a wall 3 feet away. The centre of the circle should be at the eye level.

Sit on a chair, and gaze continuously at the circle for 15 seconds without moving eyelids. Then 20 times, open and close eyes. This is one cycle. Repeat it 4 times.

Slowly, increase the gaze duration for 20-30 seconds in about 2 months. No hurry. Very Slowly, try to increase the repeat cycles to 10.

Sometimes, after the exercise, the circle may appear hazy, or blurred. Nothing to worry.

Try to avoid thoughts by focus on breath chanting Soham mantra.

After enough practice, the circle size can be reduced from 3 to 2 inches.

Instead of black circle image or idol of deity of the same 3” size is even better.

Chapter 19: Yogic Exercises for Relaxation

Shavasana :

We spend lot of energy in various activities against gravity. In sleep position, energy recharging takes place. Ceaseless thoughts also waste energy.

Procedure; Lie on the back, arms slightly away from the body and legs spread apart slightly. Head should be straight on inclined towards left or right whichever is comfortable. Let all body go limp as if it's lifeless. This gives it physical rest. But mind continues to chatter. To stop that, simply count breath. This focus stops mind from thinking because it is given a specific assignment. 100-500 breaths are enough which takes 7-10 minutes. For better quality of relaxation, start relaxing each part, starting from toes and gradually going towards head.