In this chapter I shall give some examples of my form of mental imagery process based on my understanding of how and why mental imagery works. You will notice in the succeeding exercises that the time recommended for them is short. This is a distinctly different approach than is commonly taught. The rationale behind the brevity of this approach is the notion that image is the language of no-time. This means that the image has to come as close to this no-time zone as possible. Lengthy imagery experience actually negates the nature of what is imagery. In addition, the quickness of imagery follows a homeopathic principle, namely that a small or minute amount of a substance produces a generalized internal healing response. Imagery, then, is a homeopathy of the mind. This molecular amount actually succeeds in giving a shock to the system, awakening it to respond at a higher level of functioning as it mobilizes its resources.

It is also worthwhile to consider my recommendation to do the exercises three times a day. It is by consistent repetition of the exercise that a new habit is created. Mental habits are created like physical ones—by repetition. By doing so, an actual biomenal imprint is etched in our being.

Another reason for doing the exercises is to create a rhythm that has the effect of attuning the bodymind to a regulated order. With respect to this point there are certain times of the day that we have to be reminded to follow an intention to heal. These times of day relate to transitions—sleeping to waking, viz., sun-up; day to night, viz., sundown; waking to sleeping, viz., late night or midnight (high noon also figures in here; the time when the sun is at its highest point and is just on the verge of descending). Characteristically, around the world these times of day are dedicated either to prayer, meditation, or mental imagery. It is important that clients attune themselves to a regular rhythm or practicing imagery to ensure optional benefit. I believe this point must be stressed to them.

Also, I suggest to clients that they make a tape of their own voice giving themselves the exercises. They are told that eventually they won’t need the words, but would just go and do this inner action, as they would any external action. With regard to the latter, they are reminded that they don’t need words, for example, to get up from the
Imagine that you are ready to share part of your story. Remember there are many ways to share your story...sharing with a friend...a counselor...or your AA sponsor. Listen to your inner wisdom...you will know what is right for you...Can you imagine sharing something special about your healing journey? What would it be? How would you like to feel? The meeting is now over. Is there anyone that you wish to greet? If so, see yourself doing so.

Begin with some essential steps for giving power back to yourself...the steps of learning to trust and forgive yourself and others. What comes forth for you as you imagine forgiving yourself? What would this be like for you? Relive another aspect of your life's journey for a moment. Choose one person who has let you down or caused you turmoil in the past. Create your own healing images for loving yourself and this person. What are the new images? Let them spontaneously emerge from your spirit...

Gather your family and friends in a healing image. What do you want to tell them? Listen to what they have to say. Listen to what you say in return...Know that as you continue to be aware of your special images...very healing images will continue to be present for you.

Allow the experience of letting old life programs emerge in your thoughts and then release them one by one...Release your intellectual level of being...and open to your Higher Power. Let yourself glimpse a space of your basic good self...It must occur...and every time it does...you open more of yourself...and your spirit sings its song. Remember, it is one day at a time toward recovery. Over time bring other people and other situations that need healing into your imagination. Let yourself continue to rehearse trust and forgiveness...your special touchstones on your healing journey.

Take a few slow, energizing breaths, and as you come back to full awareness of the room, know that whatever is right for you at this point in time is unfolding just as it should, and that you have done your best, regardless of the outcome...
In this book Healing Visualizations: Creating Health through Imagery (Epstein, 1989), I have included several exercises designed to help individuals maintain or heighten their health. These exercises are intended to be done as part of a daily routine and can be adapted to fit individual needs and preferences. The following exercises are extracted from my book Healing Visualizations: Creating Health through Imagery (Epstein, 1989). This book has become a standard reference text for doing short imagery exercises for healing common physical and emotional disturbances.

EXERCISES FOR HEALTH

One of the most important aspects of imagery therapy is the ability to focus on the present moment and the here and now. By doing so, we can reduce stress and anxiety and increase our ability to cope with life's challenges. Here are several exercises to help you maintain or heighten your health:

**The Lake of Health**

Close your eyes. Breathe out three times and see yourself high up in the Andes at a lake that is at eighteen thousand feet. Tell the lake you want to know the state of your health and that you want it to reveal your outer and inner body to you. Then look into the crystal-clear, quiet water and see yourself inside and out. (If you are healthy, you will characteristically see a golden color, pure pink, blue, or green. If you are ill, a gray, black, or bluish pink will appear at the site of the disturbance.) Then open your eyes.

**The Field of Health**

Close your eyes. Breathe out three times and see yourself as a general outside your tent at the head of the field of your body. Your bugler is next to you. You have a large golden flag blowing in the breeze at the top of your tent. At all important points on the field of your body are other tents with flags flying and buglers stationed next to them. Have your bugler blow his bugle and hear each bugler at each tent answer in turn. See the flags blowing at the same time and see a striking blue, red, green, orange, or yellow can bespeak some thyroid, vascular, gallbladder, liver, or kidney trouble, respectively. I would suggest that you go for a checkup when this happens. The one exception that I have found is the appearance of red in a night dream during menstruation. This is a normal accompaniment in dream life to the biological event of a woman's period.

**Checkup**

A related imagery event that can reveal some oncoming trouble is your night dreams. Here you should pay attention to the appearance of individual, bright colors. If you are healthy, you will characteristically see a golden color, pure pink, blue, or green. If you are ill, a gray, black, or bluish pink will appear at the site of the disturbance. Then open your eyes.

**Burying the Past**

Name: Burying the Past
Intention: To remove the influence of the past.
Frequency: Once a week, for three to five minutes.

Many people find that they cannot let go of the past. They may feel haunted by it, regret it, feel trapped by it, feel guilty about it, and so on. The intrusion of the past can be reduced by focusing on the present moment and the here and now. By doing so, we can reduce the weight of the past and move forward in our lives. Here are several exercises to help you bury the past:

**Name:** Burying the Past
**Intention:** To remove the influence of the past.
**Frequency:** Once a week, for three to five minutes.

Chair, put on their coats, walk out the door to the car, open the car door, etc. Thus, inner imagery work becomes un-self-conscious, rather taking on the nature of an automatic process as in external, waking-life behavior. I don't provide tapes of my voice because I don't want them to become dependent on my voice, but instead their own voice as the healer. The one exception I make is for persons so debilitated by the illness that they cannot really muster the necessary strength and/or wherewithal to create the personal tape.

This focus on the clients' avoiding dependency on my voice coincides with the overall thrust of my work, which is to preserve their freedom, which includes the least possible intrusions I might make into their lives. My aim is to teach people to heal themselves, to become their own doctors, remembering that the root of the word doctor means "to educate."

The following exercises are extracted from my book Healing Visualizations: Creating Health through Imagery (Epstein, 1989). This book has become a standard reference text for doing short imagery exercises for healing common physical and emotional disturbances. While the bulk of the book centers on daily ailments, there is a chapter on exercises for health for heightening and maintaining general health and well-being. You may notice there is a time frame given for each exercise. As part of our understanding for creating success in doing imagery, it is necessary before beginning an imagery exercise that you tell yourself the name of the exercise, its intention, and how long it is to take. By saying these things to ourselves silently, we are giving an inner instruction as to what has to take place. Saying the name serves as an orientation device that anchors us toward a healing intention. The intention we recite is geared toward directing our will in a certain direction with focused concentration. It in no way is a statement about an outcome of our efforts. While it is not the process will negate the possibility for success of the work (for more in-depth description of this understanding, I would refer the reader to my chapters on the therapeutic relationship in my books Healing into Immortality (Epstein, 1994) and Waking Dream Therapy (Epstein, 1981). I would also recommend my chapter on the "Seven Keys to Healing" in Healing into Immortality. By stating the time for the exercise, we are setting our biological clock. This means that we will give ourselves the correct amount of time for the exercise, and we shall breathe out and open our eyes at the exactly appropriate time. I mention "breathe out and open our eyes" because it should stand as a usual aspect of imagery process to breathe out before opening eyes. Doing so brings us back naturally to our waking reality and creates the transition between the inner realm experience and our return to the waking world. It makes the return gentle.

I might also mention that I would recommend shortening the time of the exercises that I have in the exercises as written. Doing them anywhere from thirty seconds to one minute is sufficient. Half a minute to one minute is really a lot of imagery time and sustains the power of imagery. As patients become more familiar with their own process and develop facility with imagery, the time can even be further reduced.

**A Bodymind Checkup**

Name: The Lake of Health and The Field of Health
Intention: To see your state of health.
Frequency: As needed, once for up to three minutes.

If, besides visiting your doctor, you want to do some periodic checking on the state of your health, following are two imagery exercises you can count on to provide information. The axiom that holds true in the world of imagery is that the image doesn't lie. Becoming receptive to this truth can be immensely helpful in developing trust in yourself, and it will be especially beneficial in assessing your state of affairs.

A related imagery event that can reveal some oncoming trouble is your night dreams. Here you should pay attention to the appearance of individual, bright colors. A striking blue, red, green, orange, or yellow can bespeak some thyroid, vascular, gallbladder, liver, or kidney trouble, respectively. I would suggest that you go for a checkup when this happens. The one exception that I have found is the appearance of red in a night dream during menstruation. This is a normal accompaniment in dream life to the biological event of a woman's period.
past prevents us from being able to function productively. Harping on it can't change it; we seem only to keep experiencing more pain. The following exercise, aptly called Burying the Past, may help to relieve some of that tension and help to put the past to rest.

**Burying the Past.** Close your eyes. Breathe out three times. You are walking along a country path. The path is cluttered with rocks, which you clear in order to make it passable. At the end of the path you find a tree. Sit by the tree; from the ground, pick up a leaf and on it write all that has pained you from your past, all the regrets and all the obstacles from the past that inhibit you from going forward. Use the sap on the leaf as ink with which to write. Then dig a hole, knowing that you are going to bury the leaf and that the past, although buried, is still alive but will eventually disintegrate. Indicate when you want the past to disintegrate by writing a date on the leaf, then place the leaf in the hole, bury it with dirt, and quickly go back to where you started, seeing if there is anything different on the path. Then open your eyes.

**Cleansing**

**Name:** The Garden of Eden  
**Intention:** To prepare yourself for everyday life in a positive way.  
**Frequency:** Daily, in the early morning, for up to three minutes.

This cleansing exercise is a wonderful way to start the day. It puts you in a good mood, and it also raises the level of your immune system. I often ask my patients to clean physically as well; clean out the clutter from their homes of an area in their homes on a regular basis, with the intention that they are cleaning themselves out internally at the same time.

**The Garden of Eden.** Close your eyes. Breathe out three times, and imagine yourself leaving your home and going out into the street (those of you who can descend a staircase should do so). Leave the street and see yourself descending into a valley, meadow, or garden, and go to the center of it. Find there a golden feather duster, whisk broom, or hand rake (depending on your preference, or the degree of cleansing you need). With this tool, quickly clean yourself thoroughly from top to bottom, including your extremities. See how you look and feel, knowing that you have cleaned away all the dead cells from the outside of your body and all the gloom and confusion from the inside.

Put down the tool and hear from your fight the sound of a flowing stream or brook. Go there and kneel by its edge. Take the fresh-flowing, crystal-clear, cool water in your cupped hands and drink it very slowly, knowing that you are washing away all the impurities from the outside of your body. Then take the fresh-flowing, crystal-clear cool water in your cupped hands and drink it very slowly, knowing that you are washing away all the impurities from the inside of your body. Feel and sense yourself refreshed, tingling, energized, and more awake.

Get up from the stream and find a tree at the edge of the meadow. Sit under the tree that has branches hanging down with green leaves. Then with your back against the trunk, take in the pure oxygen that the leaves emit, together with the oxygen in the form of a blue-golden light from the sun and the sky that comes between the leaves. Breathe out carbon dioxide in the form of gray smoke, which the leaves take up and convert into oxygen. This oxygen is given off by the leaves and comes through the trunk, entering your body through your pores. You are thus making a cycle of breathing with the tree and are breathing as one with the tree. Let your fingers and toes curl into the earth, like roots, and draw up its energy. Stay there for a long moment, taking in what you need. Then get up from the tree and see how you look and feel.

Keep the image and feelings for yourself as you leave the garden and return to your street. Go back to your home by the way you went, and return to your chair. Then breathe out and open your eyes.

**General Well-Being**

**Name:** The Red Suit  
**Intention:** To maintain general health.  
**Frequency:** Once a day, for two minutes, every day.

A simple way to produce physiological changes through imagery is imaginal jogging, a natural accompaniment to a physical exercise program that can improve its effectiveness. Even for those of you who don't exercise, or who find it boring, imaginal jogging can be beneficial. Recently a study was done at a Canadian hospital where patients undergoing rehabilitation from heart attack were divided into two groups. One group was given a typical physical exercise program; the other group was asked to perform the same program imaginally rather than physically. When the recovery rates of the two groups were compared, the imagery group was found to have recovered much more quickly.

**The Red Suit.** Close your eyes. Breathe out three times and see yourself putting on a red jogging suit and red sneakers. See yourself going out of your home or apartment and walking to the park. Enter the park and begin to run around it clockwise, becoming aware of everything you see. Become aware of what you sense and feel, of the wind passing by you. Become aware of your stride and your breathing. Notice the trees, grass, and sky. Complete the run by coming back to the point at which you started. Walk out of the park and back to your home. Take off the jogging clothes, shower, dry off, and see yourself put on the clothes you are going to wear for that day. Then open your eyes.

**Giving Yourself a New Start**

**Name:** Egyptian Rebirth  
**Intention:** To give yourself a new start, a hopeful look to the future, a sense of purpose and meaning.  
**Frequency:** Once, for five to ten minutes. This exercise is done only once every two years.

This is a general healing exercise—healing in the sense of becoming whole—that will help you give yourself a new sense of purpose. Sometimes life can become routine or dull, or we are no longer inspired or satisfied by what we are doing. This exercise will enable you to shape new possibilities for yourself.

**Egyptian Rebirth.** Close your eyes. Breathe out once and see yourself as a scarab beetle deep in the earth at the base of a root, drawing nourishment from it.
Gather seeds from the surrounding earth. Take part of the root and make a ball, using saliva and earth to keep the ball together. Begin pushing the ball with your front legs upward and ahead until you reach the earth’s surface. Find a soft spot and, tucking the ball against your abdomen, use your forelegs to make a hole in the crust, and come out onto the surface. Stay there a few moments, breathing now as an external creature and no longer an internal one. Feel the chest and lungs expanding and see the carapace (the hard shell equivalent to your back) looking straight and long as you stand up in your clear green casing. Next, feel the soft inside of your scarab body moving in a supple way within the rigid frame of the long backbone, which is seen as bright and straight. Then, using your faceted eyes, which can turn to look in all directions, see a river directly behind you and a mountain in front of you.

You have to climb the mountain and to push the ball in front of you, using your forelegs, shoulders, and lower back. The ball now has grass adhering to it, making it larger and larger in front of you, until you can no longer see where you are going. The ball is also getting heavier and heavier while you are climbing. Make sure that you don’t lose the ball; otherwise, you will have to retrieve it and start over again. When you arrive at the top of the mountain, see, in the distance, the target or goal that you want. Then roll the ball down or off the mountaintop, seeing it hit the target squarely and exploding, sending all the seeds scattering, knowing that they must land and take root. Then stand upright as a human being, seeing your back becoming very straight.

Beginning with the lowest vertebra, touch each one, one by one, to see if they are in place. If they are not, clear off the thin tissue around the vertebrae, clean and stretch the vertebrae, and put them in place. Move up to the cervical vertebrae, coming now to the atlas (the second cervical vertebra responsible for turning the head) and adjust it so that you can turn your head completely around on the atlas. Then go to the axis (the first cervical vertebra, responsible for allowing the head to bend forward and backward), and adjust it so that you can bend your head completely forward so that your chin touches your breastbone. Afterward, you find yourself becoming, or have already become, very tall.

Your head is perfectly straight and your double chin (if you have one) has become flat. Feel every joint and articulation moving freely, beginning with the toes, to the bones of the foot, to the ankle, to the knee, to the tendons stretching behind the knee, to the pelvis and hip bones, feeling them rotate. Feel the tendons stretching along your spinal column. Now stretch all the way up to the sun and take some of it in your hands. When elongating to take the sun, feel your hands and arms stretching, knowing that your hands are your antennae. With the sun, burn off the fat from your abdomen (if you have any) and massage your back. Then burn off the fat from your double chin (if such exists). Warm the rest of your body with it. Place it in your solar plexus (about one inch below the lower end of your breastbone), giving heat to it, and the solar plexus sends this heat to the rest of the body. Wash your hands in the sun, and afterward throw it back in place.

Then look at the place of your goal and see how the trees and all other vegetation have grown there, knowing that all has come to fruition there, and see it bright. Run down the mountain lightly to the bottom, run to the river, and jump across into a bright, large, clear, open space and enjoy being there. Go now to the river and bathe in it, knowing that all is repaired. Bathe for a short time. Come out and sit under a tree to rest. Then physically open your eyes and see the river, space, mountain, and trees, with flowers and fruits. See your eyes without sadness and in a new way. Know that what you want to accomplish will be finished in two years.

Relaxation

Name: Becoming Blue Light

Intention: To achieve inner relaxation.

Frequency: As needed for one to three minutes.

This exercise is for the occasions when the breathing-out exercise is not enough to produce inner relaxation, or in general when you feel you need to relax.

Becoming Blue Light. Close your eyes. Breathe out three times and see the oxygen you are inhaling coming in the form of blue-golden light formed by a mixture of cloudless blue sky and bright golden sun and the carbon dioxide you are exhaling going out in the form of gray smoke, like cigarette smoke being carried away in the air and disappearing. See the light become blue light as it enters your body, comes out of your heart, and travels evenly, gently, and smoothly through the arteries and capillaries, knowing that as it does you are becoming relaxed. When it has traveled throughout your entire body, open your eyes.

Retracing the Past

Name: Retracing the Past, Parts 1 & 2

Intention: To remove the influence of your past.

Frequency: Once a day, for seven minutes for each part, for twenty-one days.

This imagery exercise provides a powerful way to wash out past influences and past traumas in your life. It is done in two parts. The first corrects the influence of the external world on you from earliest life until now, recognized as events and places. The second corrects your own internal influences on your life from earliest childhood until now, recognized as faults and errors. It is quite successful in helping you to wipe out persistent negative beliefs and experiences.

By correcting events, places, faults, and errors, I mean that you correct either your attitude or your beliefs regarding the experience, or you correct the experience itself. You can look at past events as beliefs that you have held on to in your memory. Through this exercise, you can remove the effects of these events by shifting your attitude or beliefs about them or by washing them away. You then create for yourself new beliefs by living the corrected events with a different past and a new present. Once the new beliefs are set in place, they will be expressed as new experiences in your life!

Retracing the Past, Parts 1 and 2. Close your eyes and breathe out three times. Looking into a mirror, see, sense, feel, know, and live in chronological order all the significant disturbing places or events of your life that you can recall from earliest childhood or infancy until the present moment. After completing that, keep your eyes closed. Breathe out once, and looking into the mirror see, sense, feel,
know, and live yourself correcting these disturbing events and places in reverse chronological order, starting with the present moment going back to earliest childhood or infancy. For events and/or places incapable of being corrected, see yourself washing them out of the left side of the mirror using a fireman’s hose. Keep your eyes closed. Breathe out once and, looking into the mirror, see, sense, feel, know, and live again these now-corrected events and places with a different past and a new now, seeing how you have to become in one year from now, two years from now, and five years from now. When you are finished, open your eyes.

Afterward, go through exactly the same procedure for part 2. This time, instead of considering disturbing events and places, the instruction is to see, sense, feel, know, and live the significant faults and errors of your life. After completing this part, open your eyes.

Self-Renewal

Name: Rejuvenation

Intention: To revive you, give you a sense of renewed purpose.

Frequency: Once a week for three weeks, thirty seconds to one minute for each exercise.

When you’re feeling uneasy and need a tonic to revive you, or if you need rejuvenating or a sense of renewed purpose, try the following exercises.

Rejuvenation.

1. Close your eyes. Breathe out once. Use a spade to dig up emotions in order to find something hidden. Take what you find for yourself. Then open your eyes.
2. Close your eyes. Breathe out once. Defuse a live bomb. Then open your eyes.
3. Close your eyes. Breathe out once. See an animal coming toward you on an incline. Then open your eyes.
4. Close your eyes. Breathe out once. Herd wild horses into a corral. Then open your eyes.
5. Close your eyes. Breathe out once. Be someone being someone else. Then open your eyes.
6. Close your eyes. Breathe out once. You are wrapped in bandages up to the neck. How do you feel? Unwrap the bandages and make them into a ball. Then open your eyes.
7. Close your eyes. Breathe out once. Make your way wailing backward into a panther or leopard skin. See and sense what happens. Then open your eyes.

I hope that you have felt prompted to utilize these exercises in the way I have prescribed, and to incorporate the quickness of them in your work to ensure the power such a jolt can give to for the healing process. Certainly, I would be quite interested in any feedback regarding responses your patients/clients have had. In line with this I shall be glad to give my input and the benefit of my twenty-five plus years of experience in this arena. I can be reached in New York City at: 212-369-4080, fax 212-369-5646, e-mail jerry@drjerryepstein.org.

REFERENCES