

(IJ -04) Imagine Unity: Business leaders' experiences and perspectives on the use of mental imagery exercise in the workplace

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Abstract

This study explores leaders' interest and understanding of mental imagery as a tool to enhance the business environment. Given the popularity of mindfulness and work/life balance in the workplace, leaders are well-served to explore tools that ignite employees' investment and satisfaction. Mental imagery, also called visualization and guided imagery, has a presence in the academic literature as being a tool that improves motivation, resilience, emotional states, athletic performance, and intergroup relationships: all elements that exist in the workplace. Eighteen (18) business leaders in Southern California nonprofit Social Service agencies are interviewed with the intention to assess their interest and experience with mental imagery's use and usefulness, as well as its potential in the business arena. The current climate, which has traditionally given primacy to logic and output, has seen an explosion of interest in mindfulness and meditation as vehicles for both physical and emotional balance. Imagination, despite the oft-used qualifier of 'just', has a strong place in history as such a vehicle for shifting imbalances. There are many forms and practices of mental imagery. For the purposes of this study, the mental imagery described and discussed are of the type taught by Dr. Gerald Epstein, MD (1980/1992) i.e.: short (3-5 minutes), focused (leading with intention) and task-centered (problem-solving). As mentioned, mental imagery's effectiveness has been studied and validated in a variety of areas; this study looks to add the business world and its leaders to this repertoire.