



## It's All in Your Mind: Diary of a Health Junkie

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Summer was one of those people you love to hate. Slim and fit, she always ate healthy food and never appeared to stray with the odd binge on chocolate or chips. She always had that bouncy shiny hair straight from a shampoo advertisement, and she never appeared wrinkled, hot, sweaty or flustered. Summer always picked up her two children from school on time, probably still baked cupcakes from scratch and she managed to fit in regular workouts at the local gym. She was a health junkie – everything she did was in line with staying fit, eating nourishing food and taking care of her body.

*Tuesday*

*What a fantastic day! Everything went to plan and that Pilates class was just what I needed. I am grateful for meeting that neighbour who offers classes at her home. How convenient to walk there and be home so soon after.*

Or was she? Three years ago it was a very different story.

Summer's second baby had just turned two, the eldest was five and every day was a constant struggle. She was 10 kilograms overweight and could no longer blame the pregnancy and if she brushed her dank, stringy hair before noon it was going to be a good day! She was depressed, bored and deeply unhappy with how she looked, felt and what she ate. Dinner was always from the microwave and she could not remember the last time she sleep soundly at night.

*Friday*

*I hate today. My jeans are too tight, the kids are driving me mad and every week rolls into the other too quickly. I feel stuck. I have tried so many ways to lose weight. Nothing works. It always comes back.*

What changed? And how did she get from 'stuck' to 'fantastic'? Summer heard a radio advertisement discussing a free seminar about training your mind and decided to go along. It started a ball

rolling that ended up with her changing her diet, body shape and life choices. Here is what she did:

Step one was Summer working out that her eating patterns were emotionally related. She started tracking her eating through a diary and taking note of what time of day it was, what she was doing and how she felt. It was hard at first because most of the time she did not even know what she felt. And she forgot to accurately write down what she ate. But after a week she noticed that she was eating when she was bored, stressed, lonely, and feeling inadequate. She binged because she sometimes felt deprived when on a diet. Summer's willpower to stick to a healthy food regime and regular exercise waned and she sought several sessions with a qualified Psychologist to get to the bottom of her emotional eating.

Summer used to believe that toning her body or losing weight had nothing to do with her thoughts and feelings. She had heard that it was simply a matter of *eat less, exercise more* and her body would respond! She never really believed that her eating could be so related to her feelings - she thought her mind and body were fairly separate. That belief changed.

Summer learnt to visualise being a successful mother, and one who was happy with her children and in a loving, warm family. Because she had more confidence from the visualisations, she started **being** a better mother.

Summer heard that the mind can and does have the ability to build strength and muscle size through visualisations. She used the strategy to imagine a healthy diet, a slimmer body and one which was toned and fit and within time it happened.

### **New Age or New Attitude?**

Visualisation is no longer something practiced on a mountain top in a sarong and beads. Many elite athletes and peak performers use it at some time or another. It is a simple set of techniques to allow you to make powerful connections between your mind and body. It helps you to get positive and build your confidence. If you see it, you feel it and then you experience it before you actually do it. World class athletes begin with the end in mind.

### **Learning The Basics of Imagery**

Everyone can successfully use imagery. It is just another skill to learn and practice. You will be able to do it. How much time it takes for imagery to work differs from person to person. The end result will occur just as long as you stick with it.

Most research suggests practicing your imagery for 15 to 20 minutes a day initially to ensure that you are learning to do it properly. But as you become more skilled it might just take a few minutes a day.

The most effective images are the ones that have some meaning to you. So many cancer sufferers imagine their tumours to be similar to dried shriveled up fruit and their healthy cells to be plump juicy pieces. Children have been known to imagine battle scenes in their immune system where the good guys (healthy cells) fight the baddies (infected cells) and of course they win!

*Summer learnt to 'ask' her fat cells in her body to tell her what to do to tone up and feel better and they 'told' her (in her mind) that she needed to drink more water to detoxify and eat more vegetables. They also mentioned she needed to find an exercise activity that she really enjoyed rather than forcing herself to do something she hated.*

### **Step By Step**

Imagery works best when you are relaxed so sitting down and taking the time to breathe quietly and give time to yourself is a good start. Wear light clothing that is not too restrictive and sit comfortably. Dim the lights if you want. Close your eyes and focus on your breathing. Imagine you are walking down a set of stairs and with each descending step you feel more relaxed.

When you are relaxed, imagine your favourite scene. It could be a day at the beach, bush walking, by a lake or a great family holiday. As you feel relaxed imagining your scene, turn your mind to your problem, ailment or issue you want to address. Use one of the techniques above to imagine your concern to be completely cured at the end of the session. If the scene fades in and out, that is ok. Just relax and let your mind move where it wants. Pay attention to any sensations or feelings. Always imagine your concern to be completely cured. At the end imagine you can walk back up that set of stairs and take some more deep breaths. Open your eyes and stretch slowly. Smile!

### **In the End**

The power of your mind can be an amazing adjunct to your fitness and body shaping programs. Famous body builders such as Arnold Schwarzenegger have long used the mind in achieving their body goals and so can you. Start with a good book- one suggestion is "Your Mind Power" edited by Dr Peta Stapleton and filled with contributions from ten international authors.

Remember: what you can imagine, your mind can achieve.

Word count: 1191

**Dr Peta Stapleton and Terri Sheldon are well known Australian psychologists who have developed the SlimMinds Program that teaches the latest effective psychological techniques to break out of that YoYo failure cycle that so often occurs with traditional weight loss programs. Interested in the Programs or in Training to be a SlimMinds Facilitator? See [www.slimminds.com](http://www.slimminds.com)**