

# Concepts of Visualization

By Barry R. Jones

Territorial Manager  
**Unified Investigations & Sciences, Inc.**  
Memphis, Tennessee

## Introduction

Within us all, some more than others, is the ability to produce mental images. Many of us experience the phenomenon in the form of dreams and daydreams. However, we can focus these images and make them beneficial rather than random. Most successful people have learned to do this. Whether it is an artist visualizing his next masterpiece, an architect visualizing the creation of his most ambitious project, or a homemaker visualizing the outcome of a special meal, the ability to form mental images is an important aspect of everyday life and the ability to succeed. The concept is an important facet of any project requiring planning and logic.

As busy humans beings, our thoughts randomly move from one thought to the next. To concentrate on a specific thought or idea requires a relaxation process, a settling down. Outside interference must be limited with a concentration of thought toward the objective. For example, the busy electrician finds himself at odds with a device needing a unique wiring arrangement to function properly. In the hectic work environment he may find it impossible to solve the problem. A short while later, while relaxing during a coffee break, he analyses the problem, images begin to appear and soon he has visualized the solution.

Obviously the electrician's skill and experience allowed the visualization and thus, the solution to his problem. A lesser trained individual, pursuing the same solution may have failed, simply from lack of knowledge. Nonetheless, with experience, education, skill and visualization of the problem at hand, it was solved.

## **Effective Use of Visualization in Fire Investigations**

Fire investigators are called upon to use their abilities for logic and deductive reasoning to establish the origin and cause of fires. In many of those instances the fire has consumed, altered, distorted and destroyed crucial evidence. The consumption of those vital pieces of evidence hinders reconstruction and very often, the sheer magnitude of the event overpowers our perceived abilities. In these situations, the goal must be to use all resources available to accurately and factually identify the origin and cause. Experience, education and the ability to mentally evaluate the evidence, one piece or factor at a time, must be relied on. At no other time in the investigation process is the ability to create mental images more important.

Through mental imagery the investigator is able to model the fire mentally using data obtained through the investigative process, experience and education. Images do not magically appear, mystically providing answers. Rather, the ability to visualize is a product of the investigator's accumulated knowledge of the event and past experience. Simply looking at the fire scene will seldom provide all of the necessary data required to effectively reach proper conclusions. Influencing factors, such as construction features, ventilation, available combustibles, fire fighting techniques and others, must be identified and their impact evaluated. Additionally, the individual investigator must have sufficient prerequisite knowledge to imagine the scene as it was. Typically, investigators who have trained themselves to visualize, will mentally accumulate all data, view the area and image each scenario developed, a task very similar to producing a video in your mind.

Concentration is the key to visualization and is aided by limiting outside interference and relaxing. Getting away from the crowd and relaxing will allow the investigator to reflect on the evidence. Relaxation allows greater access to thoughts and images on a subconscious level. The individual can concentrate more fully on one line of thought and the influence of random thoughts is lessened. Thus, imagery through visualization is greatly enhanced.

An attempt should be made to visualize each reasonable hypothesis. Systematically, each hypothesis should be considered and eliminated until only one logical explanation exists. If more than one explanation seems logical, additional information should be sought and evaluated. Inconclusive findings result if the conflicts in logic persist.

## **Conclusion**

The techniques discussed in this article are intended to help the fire investigator in his evaluation process. In all likelihood, most investigators are using the visualization process as a natural adjunct to their investigative talents; others may need to focus and train their ability. Visualization is an important tool, naturally available and can be sharpened for maximum results.

The human mind is more powerful than the world's largest computer. Very much like a computer, data must go in to come out. Accordingly, education, training and experience

play a very important role in supplying the information to be retrieved when needed. Visualization through focused relaxation allows access to that information and constructive use of it.

*Author's Note: After spending many years in the public sector as a criminal investigator, I had the opportunity to learn, use and teach Forensic Hypnosis Techniques. I quickly learned the benefits of focusing the thought process. This article attempts to share the concept and explain the benefits.*

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