



The Power of Imagination

Imagination is more important than knowledge.

– Albert Einstein

The placebo effect can be defined as a positive belief in a treatment to produce a healing response. Researchers and doctors have known for many years that using a non-traditional therapy can be as successful as traditional treatment method in between one-third and two-thirds of patients. These patients demonstrate measurable emotional and physical improvement of symptoms, simply through the belief that they are being treated, even when treatment is a sugar pill or an inert substance.

Research reveals that the improvement is not magical. The patients' improvement is demonstrated not only anecdotally, but through testing of the neuropeptides that link the endocrine system with the autonomic and central nervous system. Research further shows that the placebo effect is even greater when the prescribing doctor believes in the effectiveness of the treatment.

Positive psychology has become an important part of training for amateur and professional athletes. When trained in relaxation, imaging, and positive attitudes, athletes reach their optimal performance, exceeding their previous accomplishments. Although there are jokes about golfers "being the ball," peer reviewed research shows that the best athletes can choose between successful or unsuccessful performances.

In last issue's [*Stories with Wings*](#), I talked about focusing on what works. Organizations move in the direction where they focus their time, energy, and money. When organizations honor their history and discover what works through stories with wings, they begin moving in a positive direction. Beyond these stories, the power of imagination and belief can be put to use in organizations too. Positive images become self-fulfilling and, like the placebo effect, are more powerful when imagined and believed with members of a group.

Some questions to start your team dialog and reflection:

- If you currently rate your organization a 7 out of 10, what things would be new and different if it were a 10?
- If you had a magic wand and were granted three wishes for your organization, what would you wish?

These questions can stimulate imagination. Imagination brings forth excitement, renewal, innovation, and creative ideas. Positive thoughts and beliefs bring the ability to

act in ways that exceed what was thought to be possible. New ideas, strategies, and opportunities emerge to make dreams a reality. What we believe together becomes possible.

Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right.

– Henry Ford

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