

VISUALIZATION & IMAGERY

This exercise starts to bring together everything you've been working on. **Visualization** is *seeing* your race day play out in your head, while **imagery** involves employing as many senses as possible; *seeing* the race play out, *hearing* the crowd and the runners around you, *tasting* the gels and water along the course, *feeling* your feet touch the ground, *smelling* the ocean air, and so on. In either case, the more details you can visualize or imagine, the better.

People often talk about visualization and imagery like they're easy tasks to grasp, but honestly they can be quite difficult. It's kind of like meditation where before we know it, our mind starts to wander. That's normal, so don't beat yourself up. Just bring yourself back to your visualization/imagery. It may help to break these sessions up into smaller segments, like you did with your race strategy, rather than trying to picture the entire race at one time. You can even include the events leading up to the race like waking up, getting dressed, eating breakfast, getting on the bus, etc.

I typically start by imagining race day playing out as I'd like it to. Call it a best-case scenario if you'd like. Then, after I get comfortable with that, I'll practice some scenarios that aren't as "fun". Typically these scenarios focus on poor weather, what to do if I'm feeling "off", losing a shoe or GI issues, etc. Focus on scenarios that are most likely to happen due to past experiences, training or seeing the weather forecast.

Try to do a little bit each night. Start by working through your progressive relaxation routine and then once you're fully relaxed, begin imagining the first segment of your race that you laid out in your strategic plan. The next night try imagining the second segment, or the first and second segments together. Keep practicing each night until you've worked through the entire race. Again, this isn't the easiest exercise, so consistency and repetition can really help you get the hang of it.