

## Imagery

As we discussed in Chapter 15, imagery or visualization can be a powerful force for improving your performance. It can also be harnessed as a technique for relaxation. In this exercise you will be guided through a short visualizing scenario. As part of the scenario you will follow a set of stairs and ultimately create a mental place referred to as a “Resource Room.” This mental room is intended to be a place for you to retreat to when you need to relax, focus, or visualize. The first thing you need to do is relax a little bit. You can use any of the previous techniques or you can use the script here.

### **Initial Relaxation**

*Sit or lay comfortably in an environment free from distractions. Gently close your eyes and focus your attention on your breathing. . . . Keep your depth and rate of respiration as normal and consistent as possible. Just notice the air as it goes in and out. . . . If you prefer, you can focus on the feeling of your belly rising and falling. . . . Every time your mind begins to wander, gently bring it back to this focus on your breathing. . . . Spend two or three minutes noticing your breathing in this way until you begin to feel your body beginning to slow down and relax. . .*

### **The Stairs**

*As you sit or lie there comfortably, imagine yourself standing in front of a flight of stairs. . . . They could be leading either up or down . . . . They could be made of wood, stone, grass, sand, or any other material that you would like. . . . Your stairs may be straight or spiraled. They may even split as they go up or down. . . . As you look at the set of stairs you notice that on a number of them are special containers with covers. These containers can be of any shape, size or style that you want. They may be glass jars or ornately carved wooden boxes. They may be metal lock-boxes or special capsules . . . . You move to the first step and approach the first container. . . . You open it and remove something that you will find particularly useful as an athlete. You may take out a championship focus, courage, or persistence. . . . Before you move to the next step, put into the container something that you want to be rid of and seal away forever . . . . Maybe you put in the memory of a poor performance from your past . . . or maybe your self-doubts. . . . Once you have closed the lid, move on to the next stair. . . . As you do you notice that you feel a little lighter and more relaxed. . . . Continue along your staircase, stopping at each container to remove something else you'd like to have. . . maybe you take out mental toughness . . . a positive attitude . . . or teamwork. . . . You also seal away something else that you 'd like to get rid of. . . . Maybe you seal away a negative attitude . . . a disturbing comment by a friend, parent, or coach . . . or maybe even a rival opponent. . . . After you put the item in and seal away the lid forever, continue along the staircase at your own pace until you reach the end. . . .*

### **Creating your Resource Room**

*From this place at the end of the stairs, imagine that you can travel to, or are already in, your resource room. . . . This journey could take time or be instantaneous. . . Find a way to get to your special place . . . You may walk down a hallway to get there . . . you may pass through a door . . . or ride on the back of a bird or dolphin. . . . Let your imagination find the best way to move you to that safe place in your mind where you can feel secure and comfortable. . . When you get there, look around . . . what is it about this place that makes it so safe for you? . . . Are there familiar sights or sounds that remind you that you are far away? . . . Are there colors that catch your attention? . . . or familiar movements? . . . If you are at a beach, for example, you may see or hear the rhythmic lapping of the waves on the sand. . . . You may notice the sparkling of the light dancing across the surface of the water . . . Every resource room has its own special look. . . . Take this opportunity to explore yours . . . As you explore, what can you add to this place that will increase your comfort and confidence? . . . Will you hang evidence of your past successes? . . . trophies, ribbons, or medals? . . . comments from your supporters or a coach? . . . Your room may have posters to remind you of your dreams and goals and help you stay on track . . . Maybe someone you really trust is in that place with you . . . or maybe you're alone. . . . You can choose who and what you allow to enter to feel confident and in control.*

*Every resource room has familiar sounds that you can hear now . . . Whether you hear the sound of water moving . . . wind blowing . . . special music . . . or something totally different is up to you. You may hear the comforting sounds of your own breathing . . . or maybe you only hear silence. . . . You also become aware of the sensations of your resource room. . . . If you're outdoor, you may feel the wind on your face . . . the air temperature against your skin . . . or maybe the warmth of the sun. . . . Or you may feel something entirely different. . . . As you become more aware of the sensations, you can feel more secure and protected . . . Every resource room provides the privacy you need to feel more confident . . .*

*As you feel more comfortable in this space, look around and find your "energy machine." . . . Think of the experience of suddenly getting a second wind . . . of the feelings of fatigue melting away . . . and in its place you feel a renewed energy and determination. . . . Your energy machine could look like an old fashioned coiled radiator . . . or something more high-tech with flashing lights and knobs. . . . it could be a rushing river, waves or a waterfall . . . it could simply be the warmth of the sun or a fire. . . . Your energy machine may look like a CD player that plays your favorite energizing song. . . . there are no limits to what your energy machine can be or how it operates. . . . Perhaps you'd like to try it out right now . . . hook yourself up to it or turn it on. . . . feel the energy move into you. . . . Maybe you can see the energy flow into you . . . or only hear it . . . your energy machine may be totally different than any of these. . . . find a way that works for you . . .*

*Your energy machine may simply be a confidence dispenser . . . and when you plug into it you feel a sudden surge of confidence growing inside of you . . . Or you may use this idea to calm yourself down . . . turning on the flow of ice water to keep you cool in the clutch . . .*

*Take another few minutes to explore this special room, adding those things that you want and removing those things that you don't. . . You may create a place for you to practice your mental rehearsal or visualization. . . Maybe a special chair with a screen to pre-view or re-view your best performances . . . Take a few moments to memorize the sights . . . sounds . . . and feelings of this place . . . Maybe you will make a few notes of things you will change the next time you come here. . . You can add or subtract anything until it feels just right for you. . .*

*Before you allow yourself to leave for now, memorize the feelings in your body right now. . . What do your arms and legs feel like? . . . Do they feel light or heavy? . . . What does your relaxation feel like? . . . The next time you return to this place, these feelings will be your guide to help you get back. . . After you've surveyed the relaxation in your body, slowly allow yourself to return to a normal waking state.*