

# Visualizing Wellness

Mental Health Mastermind

## Notes

### What is Visualization:

Visualization is imagining an object, action, place, or outcome. It can be used for motivation, relaxation, enhancing performance, and improving emotional wellness.

Technically, any time you imagine a scenario, action, place, or outcome, you are visualizing. In fact, visualization takes up a significant portion of your mental energy every day. When you're planning a meal or outfit, deciding what to say to a professor, worrying about the future, or feeling optimistic, you're likely visualizing. So, the question is, what are you visualizing and how is it impacting you?

### Benefits of Positive Visualization:

When used positively, visualization is an effective tool in enhancing performance, boosting motivation, mentally rehearsing a new action, and setting future positive goals. Many athletes and performers use visualization to "get in the zone" or see themselves at their peak performance level. Researchers have found that this kind of visualization has a significant impact on performance. Positive visualization is also used in mental health treatment for conditions like depression, panic, anxiety, phobias, and suicidal ideation. Research shows that the feelings elicited by the visualization help give it its power.

### The Basic Components of a Positive Visualization:

An effective positive visualization is personally meaningful and vivid. It includes all five sensory experiences. A positive visualization also pre-supposes the change you want to see. That is, it puts you in the scenario of taking the new action or living in the desired outcome as the present moment.

Taking the time for pre-work, or planning out your visualization beforehand, can help you stay focused while visualizing and elicit the desired emotion.

### Visualization Based on Emotions:

You can approach your visualization from the starting point of the desired emotional response. In other words, how you want to feel. Spend a few minutes calling to mind feelings words or phrases related to how you want to feel. Play with the words, noticing what other feelings words or images come to mind. Take brief notes as you go to help stay engaged in the process. When you have a good sense of the feelings you want, close your eyes and let your mind wander to images of times you have felt that way or images of a future you feeling that way. Allow those feelings to bubble up as you visualize this. Notice all the sensations involved. It's okay to take notes or reference your feelings words as you do this.

University of Arizona Counseling and Psych Services, Mental Health Mastermind

### Visualization Based on Desired Outcomes:

Name a specific desired outcome you'd like to achieve. Write a paragraph or so about what that outcome would look like, incorporating all five senses. Read over your paragraph and add any additional details that come to mind. You may also choose to write about why this change is important to you. What would it make possible in your life? Then, distill this paragraph down to a few statements or words.

Close your eyes and focusing on these statements or words, envision the scenario you just described. Keep the visualization brief if you find yourself daydreaming about something else. A few minutes of focused attention is more beneficial than a longer, less focused visualization. The key is to feel the feelings of the desired end result.

### Visualization Based on Desired Actions:

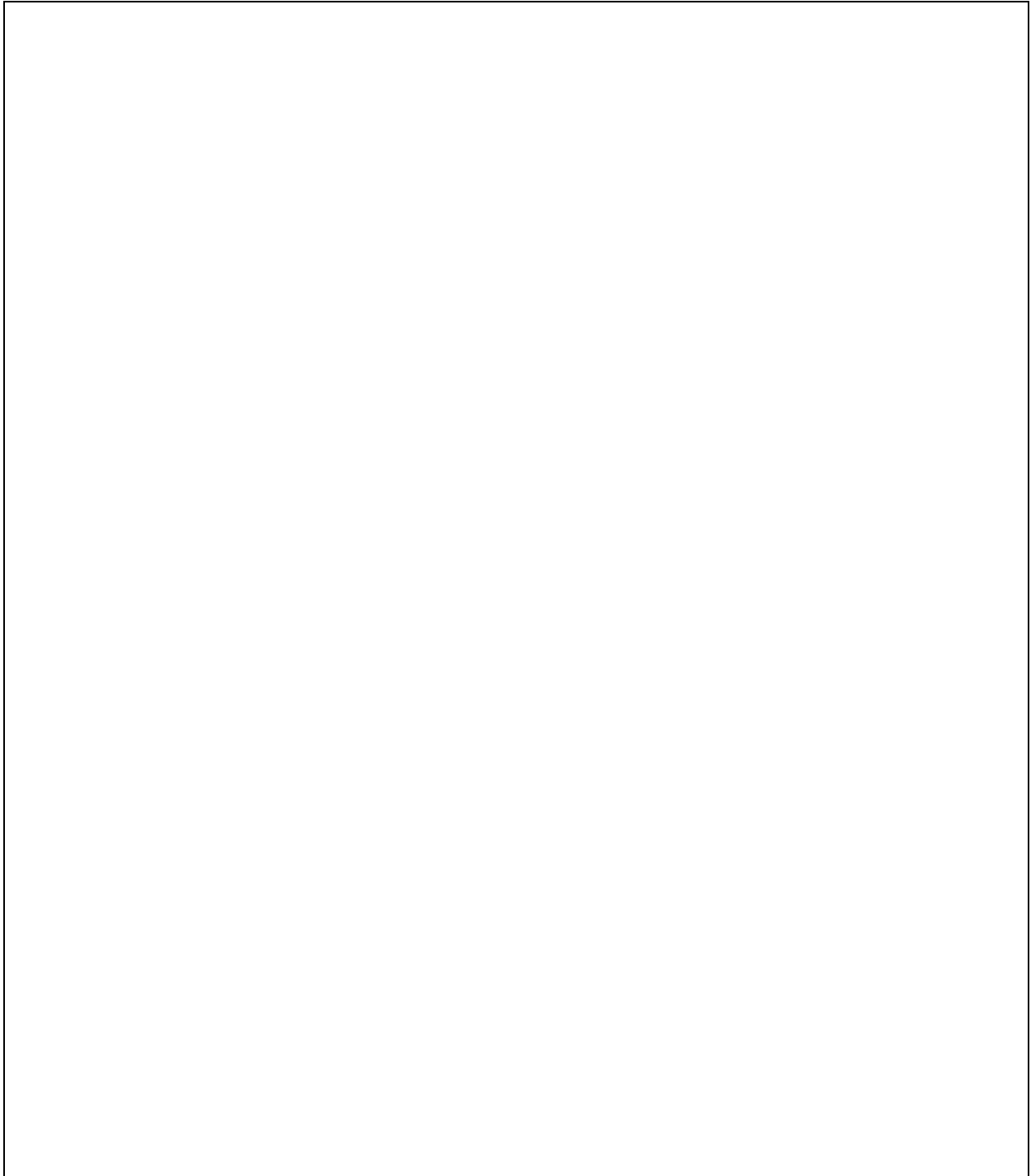
When you want to change a habit, try visualizing your new desired actions. As before, take some time to write about the new behaviors or habits you'd like to develop and why. What would this make possible for you? Be sure to include as much vivid sensory information as you can. What would it look like, sound like, smell like, feel like, etc. to take this new action?

When you have a good sense of the image of the desired action, close your eyes and see yourself taking this new action. This might involve mentally rehearsing the steps you'll need to take or seeing yourself switch from an old habit to a new habit in specific situations.

## Work

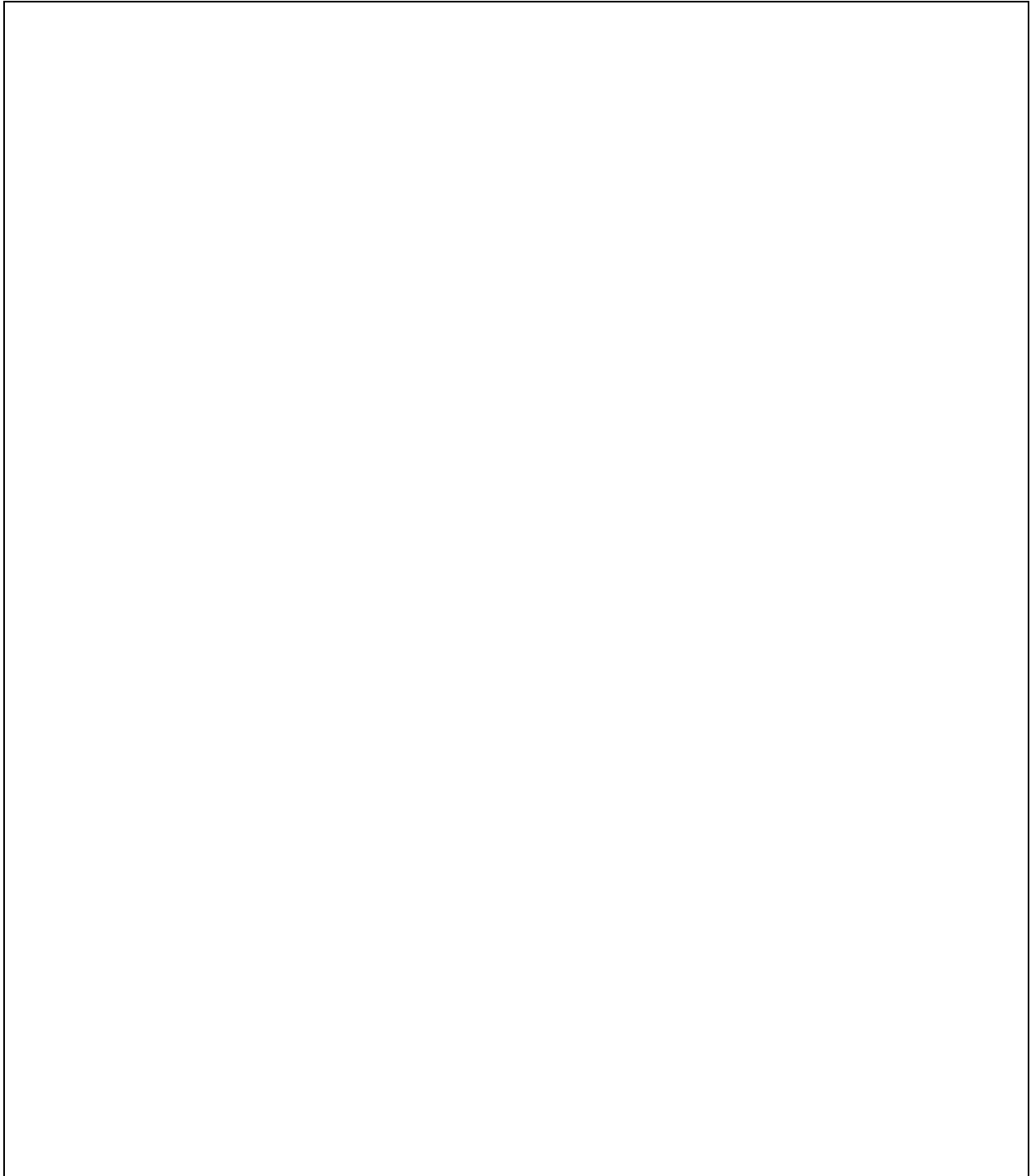
### Feelings List

How do you want to feel in life? Make a list of the desired feelings. Play with these words, noticing what other feelings words, statements, or images come to mind.

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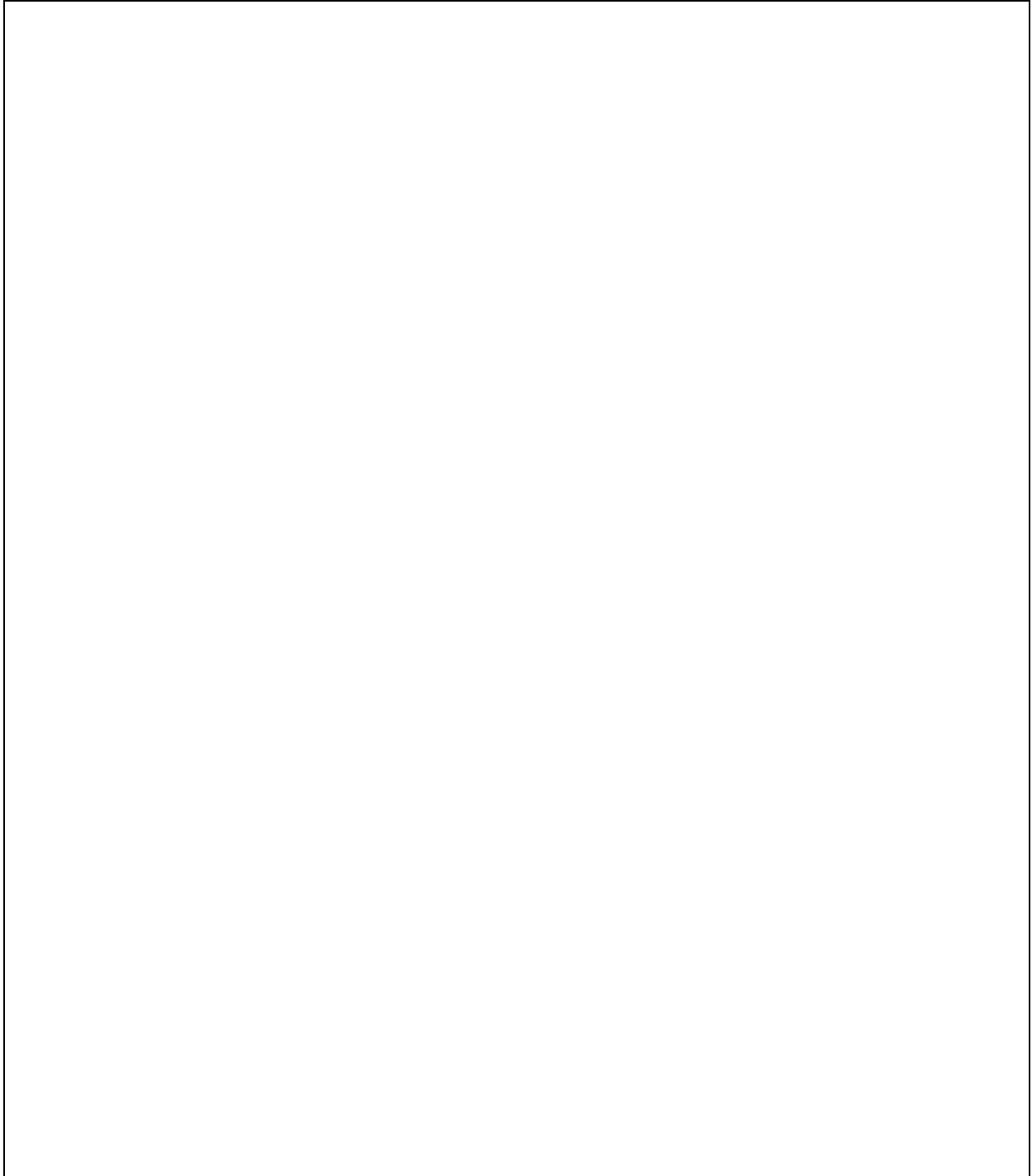
## Desired Outcome

What is your desired end result? Write a paragraph or two about what it would look like and what it would mean to you to have this happen. Be sure to include all five senses. When you're done, distill it down to a single sentence or a few words.



### Desired Action

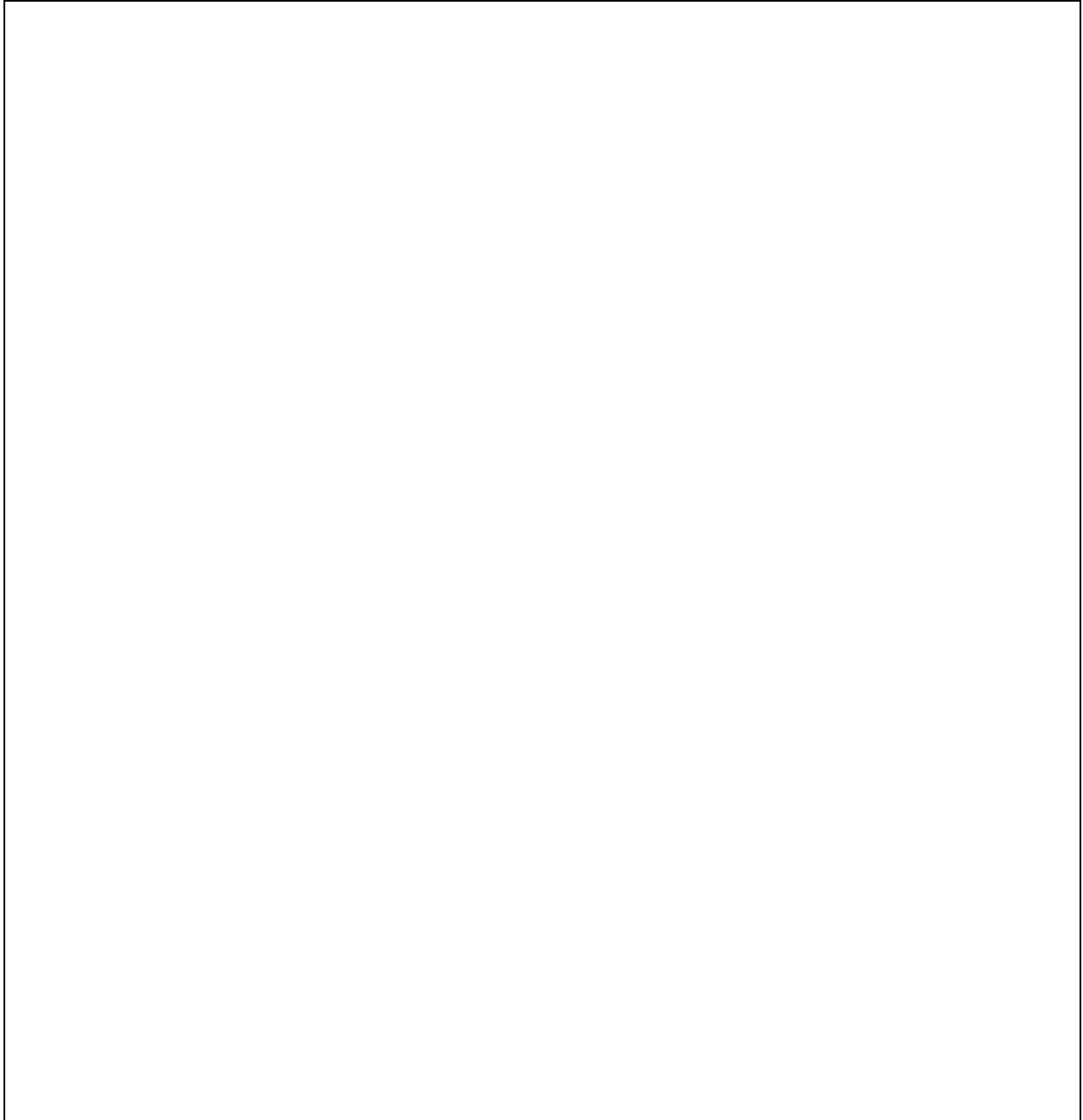
What is a new behavior or habit you'd like to develop? Write a paragraph or two about what it would look like and what it would mean to you to have this happen. Be sure to include all five senses. When you're done, distill it down to a single sentence or a few words.

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## Homework

Spend 5-10 minutes reviewing your pre-work above and visualizing each scene. Try to practice each of these visualizations at least once over the next week. It can be a powerful experience to record yourself describing what you see or how you want to feel and listen to it during your visualization.

Take notes about what you experienced and how it felt in a journal or the space below. Be sure to include the sensory experiences, such as what you smelled, saw, tasted, touched, heard, and felt.

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