

What it is

A process for creating a vivid image of a shared future

What it can do

This tool can assist you to:

- Help people create a vivid and detailed image of the future they want to co-create
- Help people get past the attitudes and real and perceived obstacles that can make it hard to visualize an inspiring future
- Generate engagement, creativity and energy for a visioning process

When to use it

- As part of any kind of visioning process: for an organizational change effort; a new program, campaign or initiative; birthing a collaboration, network or alliance etc.
- Future Travel is typically used toward the beginning of a visioning process.

How it works

The following instructions can be modified to fit the particular nature of what is being envisioned.

Step 1 Set Context for Participants

- In order to get past the attitudes and real & perceived obstacles that sometimes make it hard for us to dream, it is often helpful to take ourselves into the future and look backwards.
- We will be using a technique called guided imagery to assist us in doing this.
- You will be closing your eyes and relaxing. I will suggest a series of images for you to see. Trust and work with whatever pictures, senses, feelings and thoughts arise in response to my suggestions.
- In this brief guided imagery, we will all travel (choose a number of years appropriate to the context: 3? 5? 10?) years into the future, a future in which our vision has been realized.

Step 2 Guided Imagery

NOTES: In guiding, make sure to leave adequate space after each of your suggested images. Try to follow along with the imagery yourself, so you can get a sense of how much time to leave. If possible, dim the lights a little. Some very soft, neutral music in the background is sometimes good – especially if there's background noise.

Guide the group by saying:

- Please close your eyes.
- Take a few deep breaths and relax, settling your body into the chair.
- See a calendar, each page showing one date.
- See today's date.
- And now watch the pages turn, one by one... through the end of this year... and next year, month by month... and the next year... until we arrive at "x" years from today. (NOTE: choose the number of years as appropriate)
- It is "x" years in the future, and your vision has really happened. All those things you are working for have come to pass. Your highest hopes have been realized in the ways we wanted.
- See:
 - the impact of your work in the world.
 - the specific results you have created.
 - the way your programs have grown and developed.
 - what has rippled out into the world from your activities.
 - see the lives of people being touched by your work.
- Take a tour through your workplace (or organization):
 - See the size of your organization, and some of the new people who may have been attracted to your work.
 - How is it working? How are people working together? Feel the wonderful spirit in the organization... How its values are really being lived and modeled.
 - Listen – you can hear conversations taking place. What are people who work here saying about your success?
 - And what are others who know you saying: board members? donors & supporters? allies?
- Put yourself in the picture.
 - How do you feel about your work?
 - Can you say yes to it fully? Is this what you really want to see in the organization?

- If not, what else would you change or add?
- Right now, you are the artist of the future you want to see. Fill in the detail. Make it really what you long for.
- Now imagine a cover story in a magazine on the success of your work. Which magazine is it?
 - What is the title of the article? And the picture or graphic on the cover?
 - What's the hot lead story that captures the reader's interest about the success of your organization?
 - Every article has some bullets in bold – key points that draws the reader's attention... See now 3 bullets in bold that name some of the key successes of your work.
 - Now look at the last bullet in bold – it's called the Big Breakthrough. It describes the tipping point, the key breakthrough that really made the difference. Read about what was the big breakthrough.
- There are 3 photographs that bring to life the success of your work. See those pictures.

Step 3 Pairs Process

- Open your eyes. Stand up.
- Quickly, without talking, find a partner.
- Imagine it's actually "x" years in the future.
- One of you will interview the other about the organization, and its success.
- Remember – you're in the future, talking in the present tense about the organization and its success.
- As the interviewer, draw the other person out. Ask your partner questions about:
 - The organization and its success.
 - The impact its work is having in the world.
 - The state of the organization.
 - Make sure to ask them about how the organization grew over these years.
 - Especially ask what was the big breakthrough.
- Those being interviewed: just make this stuff up. Don't think. Let yourself be surprised by what comes out of your mouth.
- Stay in the role play; It's "x" years in the future. Talk in the present tense about the success of your vision.
- Take five minutes each and then switch roles.

Step 4 Pairs share highlights with the whole group.

NOTE: This exercise is a very good warm up to the Magazine Visioning Exercise.