

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO REHEARSING YOUR FUTURE

The science, the exercise, three real-life examples, and a 14-day practice you can start today.

SCIENCE | VISUALIZATION | ACTION

Contents

01 Why your future self matters

02 What the research says

03 The science without the hype

04 Your future-self action loop

05 The exercise: seven steps

06 Three real-life examples

07 Your 14-day practice

08 Your personal worksheet

09 A guided BPS demonstration

10 How the personalized BPS program works

11 FAQs, safety and references

Your future self is a direction, not a prediction.

01 Why your future self matters

Imagine meeting yourself two years from now. You are still recognizably you, but you handle important moments differently. You begin difficult tasks sooner. You speak more clearly. You recover from disappointment without abandoning your plans.

The Best Possible Self (BPS) exercise asks you to describe a future in which you have made a sincere effort toward meaningful goals and life has developed as well as realistically possible. The classic exercise involves writing and imagining that future.

The point is not to picture an impossibly perfect life. It is to notice what you value, which qualities you hope to express, and what those qualities might look like in ordinary situations.

Two versions of success

A writer might picture holding a bestselling novel. Or she might picture opening her manuscript every morning, writing through uncertainty, and finishing a chapter. The first is an outcome; the second includes actions she can practice.

Both may be motivating. But the second gives her something she can do tomorrow.

Ask: What would a more capable version of me do next?

02 What the research says

Psychologist Laura A. King studied writing about life goals in 2001. Participants wrote about their best possible future selves or completed comparison writing activities. The results helped establish future-oriented writing as a promising positive psychology exercise.

A 2019 systematic review and meta-analysis by Carrillo and colleagues combined 29 studies reported in 26 articles, with 2,909 participants. Across studies, BPS exercises showed average improvements in wellbeing, optimism, and positive affect.

What the findings mean

These are average psychological effects, not promises that any individual will achieve a particular goal. Some studies used writing; others used imagery or different schedules. Follow-up periods and measures also varied.

The research does not show that imagining a future automatically makes it happen, cures a mental health condition, or proves that any commercial audio protocol has been clinically validated.

Why the distinction matters

BPS is most useful when a hopeful future is paired with realistic choices. You can imagine becoming confident and still feel nervous in tomorrow's meeting. Progress may mean asking one thoughtful question despite the nerves.

Encouraging evidence is not a guarantee of transformation.

03 The science without the hype

Possible selves

Psychologists Hazel Markus and Paula Nurius described 'possible selves' as ideas about who we might become, hope to become, or fear becoming. These images can help organize motivation and direct attention toward meaningful choices.

Mental rehearsal

Imagining a conversation or a difficult task may help you prepare a response. But mental rehearsal cannot replace real experience, feedback, or learning from setbacks.

Mental contrasting

Research associated with Gabriele Oettingen suggests that imagining a desired future becomes more useful when you also identify an obstacle in the present. You then connect the two with a specific plan.

If–then planning

An implementation intention makes a choice concrete: If situation X occurs, then I will do Y. Example: 'If I finish breakfast, I will work on my proposal for ten minutes before opening social media.'

What about hypnosis?

The original BPS exercise is not inherently hypnosis. Guided audio may make the reflection easier for people who prefer listening to writing, but convenience is not proof of superior effectiveness. Hypnosis does not remove your ability to choose.

04 Your future-self action loop

Use this original six-stage framework to turn an imagined future into a testable action. It combines BPS reflection with practical planning; it is not a separately validated clinical treatment.



If the action does not work, change the plan—not your worth.

05 Try the exercise in seven steps

1. Choose a future

Imagine yourself one to three years from now. Pick areas that genuinely matter to you: work, relationships, wellbeing, learning, or purpose.

2. Write it down

Describe a good, realistic day. What have you worked toward? Which qualities do you express? What feels different?

3. Include effort

A believable future still contains challenges. Describe how you respond rather than pretending problems disappear.

4. Rehearse an ordinary moment

Picture one conversation, decision, or work session. If you do not form vivid images, use words and descriptions.

5. Name an obstacle

Choose something specific: 'I open social media when work feels difficult' rather than 'I lack discipline.'

6. Create an if–then plan

For example: 'If I feel stuck, I will work on the first sentence for five minutes.'

7. Reflect on the result

What did you attempt? What happened? What would make the next step easier?

06 Three everyday examples

Confidence: Emma speaks up

Emma is knowledgeable but quiet in meetings. Her future self is not fearless; she contributes when she has something useful to say. She imagines asking a question and tolerating disagreement. Her plan: 'If I have a relevant question in tomorrow's meeting, I will ask it before the discussion moves on.'

Recovery: Daniel rebuilds

After a breakup, Daniel struggles to imagine a fulfilling future. He pictures reconnecting with friends and rediscovering interests while allowing grief to exist. His plan: 'If I want to check my ex's profile, I will wait ten minutes and start a planned activity.'

Focus: Sophia begins

Sophia switches between tasks and messages. Her future self starts important work before waiting for ideal motivation. Her plan: 'After morning coffee, I will work on my main project for twenty minutes before opening social media.'

Progress is a practiced response, not a perfect mood.

07 A practical 14-day routine

Fourteen days is a useful structure for practice, not a scientifically established deadline for changing identity or forming a habit.

DAYS 1–3 VISION	Write about your future. Identify the qualities and goals that matter most.
DAYS 4–7 IDENTITY	Notice how those qualities would appear in ordinary work, relationships, and routines.
DAYS 8–11 REHEARSAL	Identify obstacles. Rehearse helpful responses. Create one if–then plan.
DAYS 12–14 INTEGRATION	Review your actions. Keep what works and revise what does not.

Daily reflection

What mattered today? What did I practice? What happened? What is the smallest useful next step?

08 Your personal worksheet

Write three meaningful goals. For each, choose a quality you want to express, a real obstacle, and one small action.

GOAL 1

My meaningful goal:

_____

The quality I want to practice:

_____

An obstacle I expect:

_____

If _____, then I will _____:

_____

GOAL 2

My meaningful goal:

_____

The quality I want to practice:

_____

An obstacle I expect:

_____

If _____, then I will _____:

_____

GOAL 3

My meaningful goal:

The quality I want to practice:

An obstacle I expect:

If _____, then I will _____:

09 A guided BPS demonstration

Imagine that you want to feel more confident, concentrate more consistently, and respond calmly to everyday stress.

Picture a normal morning six months from now. You make breakfast, open your laptop, and notice the familiar urge to check messages. You pause, open your most important project, and begin. You are not perfectly motivated. You simply start.

Later, someone asks your opinion. You notice uncertainty, take a breath, and answer thoughtfully. A disagreement does not become a verdict on your worth.

Now identify the qualities you practiced in the scene: consistency, courage, and patience. Which one matters most tomorrow?

Turn the scene into an action

Choose a specific cue and behavior: 'After breakfast tomorrow, I will work on my main project for ten minutes before checking messages.'

Tomorrow, test the plan. If you do not begin, look for a practical adjustment. Perhaps move your phone, prepare the document tonight, or start with five minutes. The imagined future is useful because it informs what you do next.

Your future self begins with one ordinary action.

10 The personalized BPS program

Reprogramming Mind's Best Possible Self program turns this reflection into a structured, personalized guided-audio experience.

Step 1 — Choose three goals

Describe the areas of life you want to develop. For example: confidence, focus, and resilience. Meaningful specifics help shape the guided experience.

Step 2 — Generate your free Day 1 session

The first personalized session is free. Listen and decide whether guided practice suits you before purchasing the full program.

Step 3 — Continue through 14 days

The full guided protocol is offered for a one-time payment of $47. Use the dashboard to listen and track your progress.

Step 4 — Connect practice with action

After each session, ask what quality you rehearsed and how you can express it in one real situation. The aim is not simply to finish recordings, but to use reflection in daily life.

TRY YOUR PERSONALIZED DAY 1 — FREE

Open the Best Possible Self program

The commercial audio protocol is inspired by related psychological ideas; its specific outcomes have not been established by the studies of the original writing-based BPS exercise.

11 Frequently asked questions

Is BPS the same as manifestation?

No. The research concerns future-oriented reflection and psychological outcomes, not thoughts magically producing external events.

Do I have to visualize vivid pictures?

No. Words, descriptions, sensations, and imagined decisions are all valid ways to reflect.

Is fourteen days enough to change a habit?

There is no universal fourteen-day habit deadline. Treat the period as a structured introduction.

Is guided audio better than writing?

Neither is established as universally superior. Choose a format that helps you reflect thoughtfully.

Can this treat anxiety or depression?

It is not a substitute for professional diagnosis or treatment. Seek qualified support when symptoms are significant or persistent.

What if I miss a day?

Resume when you can. Consistency matters more than perfection.

References & responsible use

King, L. A. (2001). The health benefits of writing about life goals. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27(7), 798–807. doi:10.1177/0146167201277003

Carrillo, A., et al. (2019). Effects of the Best Possible Self intervention: A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLOS ONE, 14(9), e0222386. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0222386

Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. American Psychologist, 41(9), 954–969. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954

Wang, G., Wang, Y., & Gai, X. (2021). A meta-analysis of the effects of mental contrasting with implementation intentions on goal attainment. Frontiers in Psychology, 12, 565202. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2021.565202

Safety

This guide and the BPS program are intended for education and personal development. They are not medical devices or substitutes for psychological or medical care. If an exercise causes distress, stop or adapt it. Consult a qualified professional for severe or persistent symptoms.

Do not listen to guided sessions while driving or operating machinery.

A meaningful future. A practical next step.

Start your free personalized BPS session