

## Positive anchors scenes

### Confident and capable

You may find it help-to vividly recall experiences in which you felt confident and capable.

Jolene was nervous about an upcoming meeting with her manager. In the past she had found ways to avoid such meetings. Before the meeting, she decided to use imagery to help calm herself, boost her confidence, and put herself in a better frame of mind. One area of her life where Jolene felt confident was her part-time job as a piano teacher. She decided to imagine vividly how she felt when she worked with her piano students. She remembered and imagined her sense of pride and accomplishment when her students played music well. She heard the music in her mind and felt the cooling air of the window fan in her piano room. She felt her back straighten, and she took on the posture of a successful teacher. After spending five minutes imagining this scene, Jolene felt calmer, more confident, and more capable. When she entered the meeting with her manager, she was able to sit tall in her chair, and she felt more prepared to stay in the situation and tolerate whatever anxiety arose.

### Being Welcomed

Think of a time when you experienced being welcomed—perhaps when you met a dear old friend. Remember the joyous look on their face when they first saw you. Or you might remember a surprise party that was given for you. You were the centre of attention.

Here are some things you might practice:

I think of a time during adulthood when:

- I respectfully said I would not do something.
- I wanted something and went after it.
- I expressed anger respectfully.
- I expressed anger in a straightforward and valuing way.
- I left a painful situation.
- I was speaking to an authority figure in a coherent and articulate manner.

## **Future pacing**

Future pacing consists of imagining a time in the future when you will confront a new situation that triggers something from your past: for example, going to a party where you don't know anyone, or starting a new job. You future pace it by remembering or practicing a positive anchor scene (such as feeling confident and capable) and the imagining yourself in the new situation. See, hear, and feel yourself handling it well. What future pacing actually amounts to is a positive dress rehearsal. Those of us with anxiety tend to do negative dress rehearsals. We create catastrophic images of danger and rejection. Future pacing gives us a way to reshape our inner expectations.

## **Making a Security Anchor**

This involves thinking of the two or three experiences in your life where you felt the most secure. If you have trouble thinking of these, you can simply imagine a scene of absolute security.

“Whenever I get scared, I remember my anchor scenes. It’s wonderful! It takes me out of any fearful state. The fearful feelings try to come back, but the anchor interrupts an “awfulizing spiral.” It gives me some moments of safety and relief. Sometimes it relieves my inner child’s fears completely”  
(John Bradshaw- Psychotherapist).

## **Sources**

John Bradshaw *Homecoming*.

*Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think* (2015) by Dennis Greenberger and Christine A. Padesky