

Imagination: An Often Undervalued Healing Skill

By Pete Dalton

When we hear the word “imagination,” most of us think of creativity, art, or daydreaming. We might think of children playing make-believe or artists dreaming up new worlds. Yet imagination is far more than that. It is the mind’s ability to shape inner experience, to picture, feel, and sense possibilities before they exist.

In Huna, imagination is understood as one of the most powerful forces we have. It is the language of the mind and the bridge between thought and experience. What we imagine with feeling and intent begins to take form in our lives. This is not fantasy or wishful thinking. It is the creative process itself, operating through the connection between mind, body and spirit.

The lost art of imagination

Many of us grew up being told to stop daydreaming, to focus on what is “real.” The paradigm of ‘objective reality’ was dominant and result is that we learned to value logic over imagination, measurement over meaning. We became good at analysing problems but less skilled at imagining better futures.

In the process, we lost touch with one of the simplest and most natural ways to support our own healing.

The truth is that imagination never stops. Even when we are not aware of it, the mind is constantly generating pictures, feelings, and inner conversations that influence how we experience life. Every worry, every memory, every plan for the future is an act of imagination. When we picture the worst, our bodies tense as if the event is happening now. When we imagine peace or comfort, our breath slows and our muscles relax.

Imagination is not a luxury. It is an everyday creative power that shapes how we feel, how we respond, and how we heal.

The body listens

In Huna, we speak of the three selves or three aspects of mind. The *Ku* or subconscious mind is responsible for the body and its memories. The *Lono* or conscious mind is the part that reasons and chooses. The *Aumakua* or higher self represents the greater wisdom that connects us with life itself.

Ku communicates through symbols, feelings, and images. It does not respond well to complex theories or abstract ideas, but it understands pictures and emotion perfectly. This is why imagination is such an effective healing tool. When we imagine health, relaxation, or energy, *Ku* takes those images as guidance and begins to move the body toward that state.

Every healing tradition, from hypnosis to shamanic work to modern sports psychology, uses this principle. The images and emotions we hold in mind act as messages to the body. When we change those messages, our physical and emotional state begins to change too.

Modern science catching up

Today, neuroscience and medicine are beginning to confirm what ancient traditions have taught for centuries. Studies on visualisation, mindfulness, and placebo all show that the brain does not clearly distinguish between vividly imagined experiences and real ones. The same neural pathways are activated.

Athletes use mental rehearsal to improve performance. Patients who visualise healing responses often recover faster. People who focus on gratitude and appreciation show measurable changes in their immune and nervous systems.

Science is providing language and data for something that has always been true: the mind and body are not separate, and imagination is the link between them.

Learning to use imagination consciously

The challenge is that most of us have learned to use imagination unconsciously. We imagine what might go wrong, replay past hurts, and fill our minds with images that produce tension and fear. We do not mean to create discomfort, but that is what happens when imagination runs without awareness.

The first step in using imagination for healing is to notice what pictures and stories you are already holding. What do you imagine when you think about your health, your relationships, or your future? Do those inner pictures make you feel stronger or weaker? More open or more tense?

Simply observing this inner activity begins to change it. Awareness is creative. When we become conscious of our imagination, we begin to direct it rather than be driven by it.

A simple practice

Here is a short practice you can try.

1. Take a few slow breaths and bring your attention to your body.
2. Notice any area that feels tight, tired, or heavy.
3. Picture a colour or light that feels soothing to you. It could be gold, green, pink, or any shade that feels right.
4. Imagine that light gently flowing into the area that needs attention. Let it move and swirl there.
5. Feel as if that part of your body is softening, loosening, and coming back into harmony.

There is no need to force anything. The point is to invite change through feeling and imagery. Your body will respond to the suggestion in its own way.

If you do this for a few minutes each day, you may notice that not only your body but also your mood begins to shift. You are reminding your subconscious that relaxation and well-being are safe.

Feeling is the fuel

Imagination works best when it is charged with feeling. A flat image, even if beautiful, has little power. When we add emotion, it becomes alive.

In healing work, this means that the goal is not just to picture health, but to really feel what health feels like. It might be the warmth of sunlight on the skin, the ease of breathing, or a quiet sense of joy. The more you can feel those sensations, the more you teach your body what to create.

This is why appreciation and pleasure are such effective medicines. They carry the emotional energy that powers the images we hold. Feeling good is not a distraction from healing. It is part of the process. Pleasure is an immensely powerful force.

Reclaiming a natural ability

Imagination is not something that belongs only to artists or mystics. It is a natural human function, as basic as breathing or dreaming. Every thought and feeling we have is shaped through imagination.

The difference is that we can learn to use it on purpose. We can learn to direct it toward harmony instead of tension, peace instead of fear. This is not about ignoring reality or pretending everything is fine. It is about recognising that imagination is part of reality and that we can use it creatively. When we change the pictures in our mind, we change the signals our body receives, and that begins a real process of transformation.

A new way of seeing

Perhaps the most important shift is to stop treating imagination as something childish or unreliable. It is, in fact, one of the greatest gifts of consciousness. It allows us to see beyond what is visible, to heal before healing shows up in form.

If we were taught in school how to imagine constructively, how to use inner imagery for well-being, we might spend less time fighting ourselves and more time creating harmony.

It is never too late to learn. Every moment of awareness, every breath, is a chance to imagine something new and better. Healing, after all, is not only about fixing what is broken. It is about remembering our wholeness. And imagination, guided by love and awareness, is one of the most direct paths back to it

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