

A photograph of a steep, layered rock formation, likely granite, with a large, gnarled tree growing on top. The sky is blue with some clouds. The rock has distinct horizontal layers and vertical cracks.

Would you

love to be 100% confident in your abilities as a therapist working with clients? Then...

TRY IT ON FOR SIZE

When you were a kid, did you ever play dress up? I'm sure you did. Girls likely raided their mother's make-up and wardrobes, parading in front of the mirror. Girls attended fashionable tea parties and engaged in colorful conversations with their stuffed animals. The girls knew their pretend party guests weren't really talking back to them, but within their play you can be assured many important topics were decided upon. Boys probably enjoyed running around the house with the cape of their favorite superhero fluttering behind them. The boys knew it was really only a white sheet, but in their imaginative play it became a magic cape that turned them into a superhero with the skills needed to save the world (or their unsuspecting pet dog).

One of the great things about kids is their ability to try it on for size. When they pretend to be an admired character, they actually *become* that character. You can see it in their actions and facial expressions. In these moments, they *are* the beauty queen or superhero. We find this type of innocent play both cute and amusing. We may even look back somewhat longingly on our seemingly lost ability to make believe. It doesn't appear as though our adult world has much room for such innocent imagination.

Yet, we do like our fantasies. Sitting in a dark movie theatre, we sometimes wish we were that action figure from the big screen. We may identify with the heroine of the story we are reading who transforms herself from a goose to a swan. We still fantasize. We still pretend. We just don't run around the house doing it.

However, right now, I want you to embrace that part of you that loves to make believe and I vote we both have some fun. I will provide the instructions and you provide the make believe. Sound OK? Good! This will be great!

I would like you to reserve the next ten minutes for trying something new. Don't worry, you don't have to go anywhere. You can play just where you are now.

Get yourself a piece of paper and a pencil or a pen. When you have those items, I want you to answer the questions below. Please take the time to write your answers in detail. After you have written your list, I want you to go back and read each item quietly to yourself. As you read each of your answers, I want you to visualize yourself demonstrating these qualities in front of your clients.



1. Write down at least five qualities you possess that show others you are a skilled and competent therapist.

Close your eyes for as long as it takes to clearly and vividly picture yourself acting, in a skilled and competent way, like the therapist you know you are capable of becoming. Take your time. Bring these images into crystal clarity and really let yourself feel the part of the therapist in your visualization.

To strengthen your experience, picture yourself doing these simple actions with another client. Now...

2. Write down the feelings you have when you see yourself taking the actions you just described.

Again, go slowly. Picture yourself clearly and describe your feelings accurately. Go back to your visualization of demonstrating your skills to your clients.

3. This time, add in your positive feelings as you see yourself conducting therapy.

That was great!! I'll bet you feel pretty good about your skills as a therapist-in-training. And you have good reason to feel good about yourself.

4. The last thing I want you to do is to believe WITHOUT ANY DOUBT that you are the therapist you know you can be—the type of therapist you already are. Like you did when you were a child, feel yourself BECOME that admired person until you ARE that admired person.

Be 100% certain that you are the therapist you picture yourself to be. If you notice any hesitation, anxiety, fear, uncertainty or doubt, simply ignore these thoughts and quickly return to your thoughts and feelings of competence and confidence. As you try these thoughts on for size, like when you were younger, simply know it is true.

Wasn't that fun?

VERY GOOD! YOU HAVE LEARNED THAT BECOMING THE THERAPIST YOU WANT TO BE CAN BE A WHOLE LOT OF FUN. YOU CAN RETURN TO THIS EXERCISE ANY TIME YOU WANT TO AND CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN YOUR FEELINGS OF CONFIDENCE AND COMPETENCE.

Before we leave this section, please take a minute and rate yourself (between zero to ten) in the amount of confidence you have in your ability to conduct psychotherapy.

0 ----- 10
Absence of confidence Complete confidence