

Burkeman Sample Essay #5

Looking at the glass half empty might be the way to appreciate it has water in it at all. “Negative visualization” is proven to be more effective at making people happy than “positive visualization.” In Burkeman’s passage, “The Benefits of” Negative Visualization,” he thoroughly explains how this conclusion was achieved.

First of all, Burkeman shows us the surprising negative effect “positive visualization” entails. Aside from just feeling disappointed when things don’t turn out well, a report done by the German-born psychologist Gabriele Oettingen and her colleagues showed that spending time and energy focusing on how well things could go, actually reduces most people’s motivation to achieve them. It also showed how people subconsciously confused imagining success with having already achieved it.

When talking about “negative visualization,” Burkeman sites Stoicism, and how the stoics used this way of thinking for centuries. The Stoics believed the ideal state of mind was tranquility – not the excitable cheer that usually comes with the word, “happiness.” The passage states, “The Stoics believed tranquility was to be achieved by not chasing after enjoyable experiences, but by cultivating a kind of calm indifference towards one’s circumstances.” This shows us that turning towards negative emotions and experiences as well as examining them closely, will make one happier than they were before.

Finally, one of “negative visualization’s” attributes is that it counters hedonic adaptation. Regularly reminding yourself that you might lose any of the things you currently enjoy will make your appreciation, and therefore overall happiness, rise. Merely thinking about loosing something valuable shifts it to center stage, where it can deliver pleasure again.

Burkeman’s views on “positive and negative visualization” are very well backed and developed. Situations will rarely ever turn out for the best, or worst. Fears are based on irrational and exaggerated judgments. A stable and dependable calm is much better than a brittle and delicate one.

SCORE: This essay received a score of 3.

RUBRIC LANGUAGE: A 3 paper demonstrates that the student will benefit from additional instruction in reading, logic, and sentence construction. The response may indicate an unclear understanding of the text or topic, and the examples may benefit from additional development and analysis. A 3 paper may be characterized by any of the following: little sentence variety, word choice that could be more appropriate and concise, occasional misunderstandings of major concepts in grammar and usage, or frequent minor misunderstandings at the sentence level.

COMMENTARY: Essay 5 demonstrates a summary of Burkeman's ideas in the first paragraph and then explains many of Burkeman's points in more detail while ignoring the portion of the prompt that asks the writer to offer their own opinion and thoughts on Burkeman's ideas. This summary of Burkeman is reasonably accurate and well-phrased, demonstrating satisfactory control of language and grammar, but it does not move beyond this summary. There is, in the final paragraph, what might be an attempt to respond to the second question about the writer's own views, but this response is severely underdeveloped which denotes an unclear understanding of the topic's demands coupled with a lack of developed examples.