

## Burkeman Sample Essay #9

The majority of people in our society believe in “positive visualization” and its benefits because they feel like looking at the positive will bring them better outcomes. I personally believe in this since it has helped me and my family throughout my life. However, there are people who prefer to have a “negative visualization” rather than a “positive” one. For example, in Burkeman’s essay “The Benefits of ‘Negative Visualization’”, Burkeman argues that focusing on the negative helps us prepare for the worst outcome.

Ever since I was a child, I was always surrounded by people that would tell me to focus on the positive side of situations in order to be happier. These people were my teachers, friends and family. I followed their advice and I found out that focusing on the positive does make you feel better. For example, when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, my mom was diagnosed with breast cancer. I thought I was going to lose my mother since cancer was responsible for the deaths of millions of people around the world. I believed that cancer was one of those things that would never reach my family, but there it was, and I did not know how to react to it. One factor that influenced my thinking was how people said that the brain has a lot of effect on the outcome of the diseases. This convinced me to start having a “positive visualization” of my mom’s cancer. During that time I started spending more time with my mom and that made her very happy even though she was in so much pain. Looking back, I believe that if I would not have helped my mom focus on the positive, she would probably not have made it or it would have taken longer to cure because happiness and laughter helped her not to give up.

In Burkeman’s essay, he explains that “learning to enjoy uncertainty, embracing insecurity, and becoming familiar with failure” helps us live a happier life. He also emphasizes that we should examine our negative emotions and experiences closely in order to avoid the “shock when things go wrong.” One last thing he argues is that reassuring someone else that the worst-case scenario will not happen actually increases the anxiety of that person because they start believing that the worst-case scenario will happen. However, I disagree with the points made by Burkeman because I believe that all of people’s personalities are different and that they react differently to positive and negative visualization. I know that there are people in the world who prefer to have “negative visualization” because it helps them through their difficult situations, but that is not the case for everyone.

Yesterday I swam my last swim meet for my highschool career which was CIF Finas. I swam backstroke for my school’s relay. Even though I am the fastest at backstroke for my school, I would always get nervous about my backstarts because

senior year was the first year I did backstroke. Because it was CIF Finals, my anxiety increased by a lot to the point that my heart was pumping. I knew that my backstarts were not the best and there was a chance of my slipping and backflopping. However, my teammates and coach told me that everything was going to turn out just fine and that I should focus on my backstart being good. I did just that as I jumped in the water and when the timer beeped, I did one of the best backstarts I had ever done. I felt good about finishing my career strong and I realized that positive encouragement helps you get rid of the self-doubt you have.

Even though Burkeman's arguments might help some people through tough situations, it is not the case with everyone since focusing on the positive helped me and my family in our personal lives by helping us believe in ourselves.

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**SCORE:** This essay received a score of 5.

**RUBRIC LANGUAGE:** A 5 paper is clearly thoughtful and competent. The response consistently relies on effective examples that are carefully developed. All parts of a 5 paper will be on topic, though the overall response will not be as accomplished or elaborated upon as a 6 paper. A 5 paper often has a less fluent and complex style than a 6 paper, but it does show a clear control over word choice and sentence variety while coherently observing the conventions of written English.

**COMMENTARY:** Essay 9 takes a stance contrary to Burkeman by arguing that positive visualization has helped the writer and the writer's family. It includes two well-developed examples to support the writer's claims: dealing with the mother's diagnosis of breast cancer, and the writer's own experience in swimming backstroke in the CIF finals. The paper claims that "*people's personalities are different and that they react differently to positive and negative visualization*" which provides for variation in the response to Burkeman's claims instead of simply agreeing or disagreeing with Burkeman's points in a unified fashion. And while the prose of the essay is competent, it is not fully confident in its assertions as exemplified in the final paragraph: "*Even though Burkeman's arguments might help some people through tough situations, it is not the case with everyone since focusing on the positive helped me and my family in our personal lives by helping us believe in ourselves.*"