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From: Mary Prusakova
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I recall specifically seeing my mother and father suspended upside down surrounded by a crowd of 5000 people all with their hands stretched way above their heads reaching what appeared to be downward, towards a bright blue sky. I had pictured this exact scene many times. This time it was for real. I was smack in the middle of a very difficult trick, known as the Mc Twist 540, competing as the youngest snowboarder in the 2006 Winter Olympics. I had visualized the pipe, the path along the pipe, the trick and my perfect landing over and over during my waking hours, my sleep and my practice. Visualizing my goal had allowed me to correct potential mistakes before they actually occurred. The training had proven successful. Visualization was not the only tool in my training toolbox. Hours upon hours of mental preparation accompanied the physical training. It took years of determination, perseverance and daily hard work. Even after a full day of spills, crashes and falls my evenings were spent seeking sponsors that would eventually believe in me.

The Olympics was the culminating event after winning many competitions in World Championships. Along my journey to the Olympics I had to earn my own way, sometimes only a couple of rubles at time. I set aside my aches and pains but continued to visualize the spectators upside down as I performed a first of many body flips, and drove on...

I am now sitting here at the Clifford Chance Law Office in Paris, where I am an intern. After work I visualize myself being in an amphitheater surrounded by a bouillabaisse of talented students from a round the world. As we listen to lectures by some of Harvard's greatest legal minds I can hear the clicks of the laptop keyboards as my fellow Harvard students refuse to look up at the professor as it may cause them to mistakenly hit the wrong key while typing their copious notes.

While traveling to foreign countries for training and competitions, I tried to visualize what it would be like to actually live in one. To my delight, at the age of 16, I won a scholarship and was awarded a participation in a one-year Rotary exchange program in France. This experience was the first time I had not only to compete, but I had to do so in a language that was orthogonal to my native Russian. Luckily, now, in addition to French and Russian I am also fluent in English and Norwegian.

In 2008, motivated by my interest in international and legal affairs and in public speaking, I was accepted by the University of Paris I, Sorbonne to study law. The power of the mind can sometimes be frightening. I remember with trepidation, on this very first day of class being sternly told that though we were now 2000 incoming students, we should be aware that only 300 were expected to graduate. So I closed my eyes and began to visualize myself as one of those lucky 300.

If I push hard on the envelope of my future images I can see myself being an attorney, defending my clients, attempting to improve the lives of those I represent. I believe that debating in a court is a competition and it is even more rewarding than cheers from the crowd. The competition of ideas and the search of compelling arguments require skill and practice not unlike sports training. At trial small changes make large differences, just as in sports tiny errors might lead to a tragic injury. Both the legal system and the sport world look backward to precedent, though in sports we talk about breaking one's own records as well as the world's best. I visualize myself doing both. Being prepared for the unknown I will face new challenges. Following the rules of the game I will push the extremes - this time in the legal world. I believe that law will enable me to do intellectually what snowboarding has enabled me to do physically.

At this juncture in my life, I am an intern at Clifford Chance in Paris. While working here 12 hours a day, I know that it is just another step before studying at HLS. This experience gives

me an insight into the life of a lawyer, the opportunity to conduct due diligences and attend hearings. I am particularly drawn to the challenges I find at the intersection of International business law and arbitration. My genuine interest has developed into an enthusiasm to pursue this career path, which has only increased in my years of study and real world experience at the law firm. But I understand that I need more skills which Harvard Law School, my desired next step to becoming a successful lawyer can give me.

Now I am practicing another visualization. This time I am standing on the stage being handed my Law diploma by the Dean. I can see and hear the Dean congratulating me. I look over again, and see my mother and father and other spectators, reaching their hands towards the sky. However this time they are all right side up.