

VisionNews

Vision Education Centre

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Dear friends,

What a joyous time of year this is, and a very fitting time to renew our commitment to seeing with pleasure and ease.

We can practice looking at details up close with interest and curiosity by stopping to examine the hedges for buds as we walk. We can glory in the vibrant green as the leaves begin to appear on the trees, and enjoy the new life emerging from branches that seemed lifeless only a few short weeks earlier. We can watch as the spring flowers bloom, and give thanks as the world changes from grey and white, to a delightful palate of colour.

Happy spring! Happy seeing!

Elizabeth Abraham

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'Under the conditions of civilized life men's minds are under a continual strain. They have more things to worry them than uncivilized man had, and they are not obliged to keep cool and collected in order that they may see and do other things upon which existence depends. If he allowed himself to get nervous, primitive man was promptly eliminated; but civilized man survives and transmits his mental characteristics to posterity.

...The remedy is not to avoid either near work or distant vision, but to get rid of the mental strain which underlies the imperfect functioning of the eye at both points.

...Fortunately, all persons are able to relax under certain conditions at will...To secure permanent relaxation sometimes requires considerable time and much ingenuity. The same method cannot be used with everyone. The ways in which people strain to see are infinite, and the methods used to relieve the strain must be almost equally varied.'

From *The Cure of Imperfect Sight by Treatment Without Glasses* by W. H. Bates

EXPLORATIONS OF A VISION STUDENT

Thanks to P.L. from Ottawa, for the following:

Approximately, 10 years ago I discovered a new way of seeing, which contrasted with my usual way of seeing. Yesterday, I re-discovered and deepened that realization about those two ways of seeing with eyes/mind; this realization led me to believe that I often see things in a way that might actually cause stress to my eyes and have an effect on the proper functioning of my vision, i.e. reduce the ability of my eyes to accommodate to near or far seeing. From this realization, I developed an eye/mind exercise which remains to be elaborated and tested over time but which still seems to me to have enough value, at first sight, to merit further exploration. See what you think.

Those two ways of seeing are a little difficult to express or to convey in words since the observation/experience is new to me and does not seem to be a familiar or common one in normal everyday life. I will try to express, describe and convey this subtle observation or experience in my own words, hoping that the words I choose will at least point in the direction of my meaning.

I realized that my usual way of seeing was such that I usually looked **AT** things/objects (involving some effort/strain) rather than letting the objects or group of objects I was seeing come to my eye, or simply letting them make their own imprint or impression; it almost seemed as if there were two ways of seeing, which somehow involved some kind of movement of energy but in different and almost opposite directions. This may sound wild and far fetched but this experience definitely spoke to me in a very intense way.

Before, I was seeing objects rather than letting objects be seen; the best analogy I can think of is that it was as if I was looking "from" (inside) my eyes outward, projecting outwards, as if the act of seeing was more like "grasping actively" the objects (or group of objects) on the outside and that this kind of seeing could be qualified as somewhat "hard"

relative to another kind of seeing unknown to me until then; this other way of seeing was a more receptive kind of seeing. Rather than putting out energy to see, it was more like taking in the energy or allowing the objects to come in through my eyes into my mind. I received the objects, their form, color and texture or the energy of objects. It was as if my mind/eyes did not have to make an effort to see but rather that seeing could happen on its own, “passively”, simply by receiving effortlessly the objects in my field of vision onto my mind. This kind of seeing was soft, gentle, open to receive, peaceful, effortless and relaxed, simply aware of the impressions they left on my mind through my eyes.

Could it be that those two ways of seeing may be responsible, at least partly, for the ability or disability of the very sensitive eye muscles and the pupils to accommodate and provide a clear or a blurry vision? Could it be that the “grasping/putting out” habitual way of seeing causes the eye muscle to become extended outwards ever so slightly, and the “passive/receiving in” way of seeing causes the eye muscle to contract ever so slightly? Could it be possible then to measure the very small extension/contraction (atrophied tightening) of muscles in the eye, which could very well be producing unclear vision? Could this also point to the intimate relationship that exists between the eyes and the states or attitudes of the mind? Could this relationship be one of the main causes of poor vision either nearsightedness or farsightedness? [Not to mention the effects of mind states on other senses]. Could it be that any stress-producing emotion in the mind, which is related to or caused by what is being seen, has a similar and proportional effect on the eyes and even on other senses.

This realization led me to see (as in an “in-sight” feeling) that the first kind of seeing, may well have been developed through the act of reading, which I believe was often done in an effort/strain to understand or even to remember the material being read at school. In any case, I have become aware now of two ways of seeing and am practicing, consciously, to see in a “passive/receptive” way, allowing mind to receive effortlessly through the eye and to be touched in a neutral way by the outside world without the stress of judgments, fears, threats, doubts, narrow meaning; this second way of seeing could be called the “neutral/passive/receiving” way of seeing contrary to the “grasping/attributing/putting out” way of seeing.

A POSSIBLE EYE EXERCISE

Set aside some quiet time to explore the experience that this eye exercise may provide and to allow the mind to become open to possible new understandings and discoveries. Sit quietly and comfortably for a

minute, maybe with the eyes closed; simply bring your awareness to follow/watch your breath, being aware of each motion of your breath, in and out. Also be aware/observe the natural pauses that happen automatically between breaths. Do this for a few minutes to slow the mind down. Continue to be aware of your breath throughout the following exercise:

Open your eyes and see what you are looking at: an object or group of objects or even better a panorama of objects in your vision. (A natural setting could offer a good panorama of objects.) Keep looking at this same panorama of objects with or without glasses; simply gaze at this panorama, naturally, allowing the eye to wander where your interest/observation brings you, for a minute, as if you were calmly observing the objects in this panorama, their nature and their relationship, whatever comes up or flows for you. Then just look at the whole of the panorama of objects, everything in general and nothing in particular.

Now, while still looking, become aware of the way you are looking or seeing. Notice if you are looking out and at the panorama as if it were separate from you, as if your vision was going out to the panorama of objects and putting out energy in the seeing. If so, allow the objects or group of objects in your vision to come to you or towards you, allowing them to enter in as a whole; allow yourself, or your mind, to take in, to receive and to be touched by this panoramic vision in kind of a neutral way, letting go to your vision, letting in the impression of your vision on your mind through the instrument of the eyes. Allow yourself to receive “passively” and effortlessly the objects in the field of your vision onto the mind. Receive it, softly, gently, sensitively. While still being present to your breath and to this vision, open yourself to receive, welcome the image of this panoramic sight through your eyes, let your naked mind be touched by it; allow your empty mind to absorb it in the here and now. Simply accept it in a relaxed way without attributing any judgment (as good or bad – right or wrong) but simply accepting your vision for what it is, no more, no less. Allow this ensemble of objects in your sight to be received though eye/mind and to speak to you sensorially through their form, size, colour, movement and simply for their existence or beingness, just being present to the experience. Maintain this kind of “neutral/passive/open to receiving” way of seeing as long as you want.

One can possibly come to a sense/feeling of detachment and yet also one of gratitude for the gift of seeing and receiving through the medium of eyes to the mind. This kind of seeing approach could perhaps be applied to words on a page, which can speak to an “open to receive” kind of mind/heart.

Happy explorations and discoveries!