

VisionNews

Vision Education Centre

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Dear friends,

The last issue of this newsletter contained a few **stories** in which various people remember their eyes and incorporate vision activities into their daily lives. I received many emails and phone calls from students who found that these stories inspired them to do the same thing in their own lives. In this issue you will find a few more. I hope that reading them will give you ideas of things you can put into practice in your own journey toward healthy vision.

The **workshops** in Montréal and Musselman's Lake this spring were very successful. In September I will be teaching another workshop at beautiful Linden-on-the-Lake at Musselman's Lake near Stouffville, and one at the Great Central Sun Naturopathic Clinic and Healing Arts Centre near King City. Watch for details coming soon.

If you like the idea of a **Vision Walk** on Toronto Island with other vision students and if Saturday 22 August suits you, please let me know as soon as possible. If there is enough interest in that date I'll contact you and give you the details.

My very best wishes to you all for a wonderful summer!

Elizabeth Abraham

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'The act of seeing is passive. Things are seen, just as they are felt, or heard, or tasted, without effort or volition...In imperfect sight things are sought and chased after. An effort is made to see them...The mind is the source of all such efforts from outside sources brought to bear upon the eye...Mental strain of any kind always produces a conscious or unconscious eyestrain, and if the strain takes the form of an effort to see, an error of refraction is always produced.'

'The cause of any error of refraction, of a squint, or any other functional disturbance of the eye, is simply a thought - a wrong thought - and the cure is as quick as the thought that relaxes...This relaxation cannot, however, be obtained by any sort of effort...so long as people think, consciously or unconsciously, that relief from strain may be obtained by another strain their cure will be delayed.'

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

HOW WE DO THINGS

We read in this quote from Dr Bates that the act of seeing is meant to be passive, that the eyes are meant to see without effort. When did we first begin introducing effort into seeing? What was the strain in the mind that caused the muscles around the eyes to grip and hold rather than remain flexible and responsive?

Was it when we were in school and felt that we needed to be the best in order to be accepted by our parents and teachers, or after we moved to a new country, took a new job with a demanding boss, lost our job, turned forty, got divorced? Did this attitude of tension become a habit that is still in effect today? In what ways are we still straining to see, or straining not to see? Can we imagine living a life of more awareness, more ease?

What are the 'wrong thoughts' that Dr Bates talks about in his quote? The answer is different for each person.

Perhaps we notice that we have a habit of trying hard to 'do it right', and that following instructions to the letter is so important to us that we do not even notice how we are actually feeling as we go about our activities. If we then try hard not to try so hard, we are only piling one 'wrong thought' on top of another. The aim is relaxation, and relaxation cannot be obtained by effort. The next time we notice ourselves in this situation we might experiment until we discover how we can do the same activity in a way that is still efficient and at the same time more interesting and enjoyable for us. This is true whether we are at work, at play, or doing vision activities. We are as capable of introducing tension into activities that are designed to relax us as we are of doing anything else with tension. Someone said: 'How you do anything is how you do everything.'

Perhaps our habit is to do everything at top speed and not notice how much tension this causes. Instead of criticizing ourselves and trying hard to slow down, next time we find ourselves rushing down the street we might experiment with taking a breath and opening ourselves up to include awareness of the space around us. Just thinking the word 'saunter' helps me!

Perhaps we are in the habit of concentrating so hard on details that we lose the big picture. We need to be able to see the individual tree and the forest, to have the capacity for both central and peripheral vision. For me, relief from strain can usually be achieved by opening up to 'the more', by being curious and interested in both my inner process and the world around me. What thoughts relax you?

HAPPY EYES ALL DAY LONG

1. Palming in Bed

She is 12 years old and has not been seeing as clearly at school lately as she used to. A few weeks ago she discussed this difficulty with her aunt, who suggested that she get into the habit of Palming before sleep. She decided to try it as an experiment.

For the last few weeks she has been getting ready for bed, brushing her teeth and reading her story as usual, but now she stops the story earlier in order to Palm. She closes her eyes, rubs her hands, and puts her warm hands around her closed eyes. This evening she is particularly absorbed in her story and is just coming to a very exciting part when it is time to stop for the evening. She decides to remember the story, the characters, and what they were doing at the end of the chapter while she Palms. In her mind she makes up the next part of the story. She imagines the children she is reading about continuing their adventure. The pictures that form in her mind as she tells her story thoroughly entertain her.

As she Palms she feels her body comfortably relaxing against the bed, her head sinking into the pillow, and her breathing getting deeper and deeper as she gets more relaxed. After some time she just naturally falls asleep.

When she has been doing this for several weeks she notices that every morning her eyes feel much better, and that it's easier to see. She sleeps more deeply now, and her eyes are bright and comfortable when she wakes up.

Her mother remarks on the difference in her daughter's eyes, and also notices that she seems calmer than she used to. She asks her daughter what she has been doing differently, and hears all about the Palming experiment. Her mother decides to do the same thing, as her eyes are always tired and uncomfortable in the mornings. For years she has been in the habit of reading herself to sleep. Now she stops reading well before it is time to go to sleep and remembers the story she has been reading as she Palms. At other times she listens to an audio book while she Palms her eyes. She finds audio books in the library for her daughter as well.

Sometimes they Palm together and tell each other stories. This is great fun. Both mother and daughter enjoy their Palming experiment so much that they decide to make it a permanent bedtime habit.

2. Walking to the Supermarket

He is walking to the store on a beautiful spring morning when he suddenly hears, coming from a tree, the song of what sounds like hundreds of birds. He looks at the tree and sees that it is covered with brown, dry leaves which completely hide the birds. It sounds as if the tree is singing. He stops to listen. The sounds of the traffic and of the busy street fade into the background as the birds sing their song. He finds himself smiling with delight.

Suddenly the birds appear as if by magic. They fly out of the tree to a nearby ledge. He watches the movement as they flap their wings and fly up into the blue sky to reach the ledge. He counts the birds as they sit, noticing the details of whatever he can see as he looks from one to another along the row. After a few minutes they rise once again into the air and descend into the tree, where they again become completely disguised by the leaves. This unexpected encounter with the natural world on a busy city street causes

him to walk with a lighter heart and step as he continues toward the store. He notices that this brief pause has helped his eyes feel more relaxed, and that he sees more clearly.

3. Vision Games While Driving

Between driving the kids to and from school and lessons, getting her self to work and back and doing the shopping and errands, it seems that she is constantly in the car. When she is tired, her eyes often fall into a stare and she drives on automatic pilot. She decides to look for ways in which she can be more present while she drives.

Since she often gets impatient at stop lights and resents the time it takes to wait for the light to change, she begins by thinking about what she could do when she is stopped at a red light. At the next light she decides to focus on something straight ahead and see how quickly she can become aware of cars coming from left and right in her periphery. At another light she breathes deeply as she moves her eyes from left to right, up and down and diagonally in order to stretch the muscles around them as she waits. On the next one she rests her eyes by closing them each time she breathes out, and thinks of them settling in their sockets. Another time she moves her head from side to side with her eyes pointing in the same direction as her nose, and as the cars go by they act as shifters to increase the movement in her eyes. After a while, instead of dreading stop lights, she looks forward to them.

She often finds that when she is driving on the highway her mind is thinking of other things. Not only is this dangerous, but she suspects that it is part of the reason why her eyes get so tired after highway driving. She decides to shift her eyes from mirror to mirror, from her dashboard to the license plate of the car in front of her and then as far out into the distance as possible, just as she used to when she was first learning to drive. As she shifts her eyes they feel livelier rather than more tired, and as she notices what she is looking at her mind gets a rest from the constant stream of planning and worrying thoughts that usually tire her out. She arrives at her destination more rested and alert than usual, and even the bickering of the kids in the back seat does not annoy her as it used to.

When her eyes are livelier and she is more present, she begins to take more interest in her surroundings. She notices that as the car moves forward in space the houses, trees and people appear to be moving backwards. She brings her children's attention to this illusion. The youngest, who is often car sick, says he does not know what she is talking about. His brother and sister ask him to look at a house up ahead then, as they approach, they point out to him that the same house is now level with them, and then behind them. They ask him to imagine that it is the house that is moving instead of them. He suddenly looks relieved and says he thinks that is the reason he is often car sick. Somewhere in his mind he is trying to make the movement stop so that he can look at things. He decides to allow things to move by and finds that he feels much better.