

VisionNews

Vision Education Centre

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Dear friends,

I hope you enjoy this 50th issue of VisionNews. It will be the last one for a while. All my writing energy is going into my book at the moment. I'll let you know when it's published!

I'm sure that all of you who have enjoyed the newsletters will be delighted to learn that my colleague **Skydancer** is now producing a regular newsletter. If you want to receive it please contact her at 416-923-3893. Perhaps you would like to take a look at her website www.awareness-matters.ca to find out about the other healing modalities she practices, as well as about her work with Vision.

I continue to teach private lessons and occasional workshops. If I have the correct contact information for you, I'll keep in touch. If you ever want your name to be taken off my list, please let me know.

My next workshop will be in Edmonton on 14 and 15 May 2011. It's being organized by The Canadian School for Self-Healing. Please contact Summer Bozohora for information and to register. Visit her website at www.csshealing.com.

With love and best wishes to you all!

Elizabeth

Elizabeth Abraham

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Here is a selection of poems by the Sufi poet and mystic
Jelaluddin Rumi

I became totally eyes from head to feet.

*Dissolve your whole body into Vision.
Become seeing, seeing, seeing!*

*In order to see you,
Your face, your eyes,
One must first clean the surface
Of the heart's mirror with love.*

*Keep knocking, and the joy inside
Will eventually open a window
And look out to see who's there.*

*Out beyond ideas of wrong doing and right doing
there is a field.
I'll meet you there.*

PRACTICING

When asked how much time one should practice the Bates Method, Dr W. H. Bates replied: 'All the time.' You might well ask: 'How is that possible?'

Dr Bates' answer is a reflection of the fact that the purpose of the Method is to teach good vision habits so that we use our eyes well all the time. When we want to get really good at anything we naturally make it a priority in our lives.

For instance, my son-in-law, who is a musician, lives his music. Whenever he has some spare time, he practices his drums. When he walks around the house, drives - whatever he's doing - you hear him singing snatches of songs. The music is inside him, and it just comes out no matter what he's doing. My grandson is the same when he's learning a new dance. He practices the hand movements while he walks down the street and the foot movements at every opportunity.

In both these examples, even though the process of learning is challenging, it's also fun and interesting. Practicing is an end in itself as well as a means to an end. It just so happens, that in doing the things these people love to do, they get better at it. The common denominators are love and fun.

How can we translate this into our vision practice?

I love the feeling of the sun on my closed eyes. Whenever the sun is out I spend a few moments as often as possible Sunning my eyes. I don't have to make an effort, I do it because it feels good and I love feeling good. The same thing is true with Palming. Covering and resting my closed eyes not only makes them feel good, but calms and centres my mind as well. I love the feeling of rested eyes and calm mind, so I'm always looking for times to Palm. Are there things you do for your eyes that you really love doing?

It took me a long time to get to the place of doing what I love to do. I spent most of my life trying hard to do things I had to do, and doing things I thought were good for me. I put a lot of effort into everything I did. Now that I'm older, the lines in my face are a reflection of all those years of effort! When I first started the vision activities, I put the same effort into doing them that I did into everything else.

Over time, I came to understand that if I wanted to see more clearly, I would have to explore new ways of doing and new ways of being. I would have to learn to let go of straining my eyes and my mind.

The question becomes, what is in the way of letting go? In order to answer that question, I need to observe what I'm doing, what I'm thinking, and how my body is reacting.

When I started doing that, I realized with a shock that I was unconsciously introducing tension into my whole body, as well as my eyes, much of the time. It was painful to admit that I had not been taking care of myself as I would a beloved child or friend. I began to watch out for ways to love and care for myself and to allow myself pleasure and fun. The vision activities are a way for me to do that.

Just like my son-in-law and grandson, I began looking for opportunities every day to put these things into practice as often as possible. As I did that, they became my new habit. Now I don't even have to think about it. I just naturally start to sway when I'm in a bank line up, do a gentle swing on the subway platform as I wait, close my eyes when I'm on the phone, and Palm many times a day. It's fun, and feels good!

The trick seems to be to develop the habit of being present enough to notice how we're doing things so that we're aware as soon as we use too much effort. I've been practicing all this for a long time, and there are still times when I fall back into my old habits of over-concentrating and getting lost in my thoughts. But then I notice how tense my eyes feel, and come back to using them well. Now that I know the feeling of relaxed happy eyes that move freely, I can bring the feeling back by recalling it or by taking a break.

I'm sure there are times when my grandson gets caught up in the pressures of school work and forgets the wonderful feeling of his energy flowing freely. But however tense he is, as soon as he remembers the feeling of practicing 'Liquid', his mind brings him back to a feeling of ease.

I believe that this is what Dr Bates meant by: 'All the time'. He expected that we would want to make good vision habits our regular practice because they feel good. And, as a bonus, when we use our eyes well, they eventually see more clearly.

Right now the thing that's fascinating enough for me to want to practice all the time is the concept that Rumi talks about, of becoming '*totally eyes from head to feet*'. What about you, what do you love practicing these days?

SOFT EYES

I give students a bookmark to use when they're reading. I ask them to put it 2 pages ahead, and when they come to it, to do what it says: Breathe, blink, and change focus near to far as you look with soft eyes.' Many people ask what 'soft eyes' means.

The best way to know what 'soft eyes' are, is to first experience 'hard eyes'. Sit quietly and focus very intently on one thing, perhaps a letter on this newsletter, or something in the room. Concentrate intently on the object. Focus on every detail to the exclusion of everything else. This is looking with hard eyes. After some time, notice how your eyes and the rest of your body feel.

Now relax your eyes. See the object in the centre of your

gaze, but be aware of everything else around it at the same time. In other words, include your peripheral vision as you look at your object. Be aware of your body, and of the whole space around you. Feel as if you are looking from a place behind your eyes and receiving the image of the object rather than going out to grab it. This is looking with soft eyes. How does it feel?

When you looked with hard eyes did you see anything besides the object you were looking at? What did you see when you looked with soft eyes?

I suggest you walk around the room shifting back and forth between looking with hard and soft eyes. When you look at something ahead of you with soft eyes is it easier to be aware of your breathing, of your feet on the ground, of any tension in your body, and of the sounds around you? When you look intently with hard eyes, are you unaware of your body as well as the rest of the world around you.

This is the distinction between central and peripheral vision. We need both, so that we are aware of what we are looking at in the context of everything around us. One of the things that cause computer eyestrain is staring with hard eyes at the screen with no awareness of the room around the computer and the person who is doing the staring!

VISION EDUCATOR TRAINING IN MAINE 2011/12

My colleague, Rosemary Gaddum Gordon, and I have now set the dates for the next Vision Educator Training. The last training was held in Toronto. This one will take place in Eliot, Maine beginning in September of 2011. I know it sounds like a long way away, but since the training takes a whole year to complete, participants need time to prepare their schedules for it. The details are now on the Vision Educator Training Institute page of our website at www.visioneducators.com. If you know of anyone who might be interested, please forward the information to them.

There are very few Vision Educators in North America, so the fact that people can improve their vision and learn to see more clearly is not well-known. Being a holistic Vision Educator is a fulfilling and much-needed career

Since there are many aspects of healthy vision, Vision Educators often combine their teaching with other health practices. Skilled Vision Educators help their students discover the aspects of healthy vision on which they need to focus, and support them in their learning process.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were a Vision Educator in every community, if parents and teachers knew how to help children maintain their healthy vision for a lifetime, if older people knew that they could prevent a lot of the vision deterioration they have come to expect by paying attention to the needs of their eyes?

Since Vision Education is so little known, those who embark on this career are on the leading edge of helping to expand the current paradigm of vision care. They can enjoy a fascinating and satisfying career, and improve their own vision as they help others do the same.