

VisionNews

Vision Education Centre

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Issue #39 August 2007

Dear friends,

I hope you are thoroughly enjoying the summer!

This fall, I am focusing on teaching private lessons and the Vision Educator training only, and will not be teaching group classes and workshops.

Skydancer, a very skilled Vision Educator who took the professional training course with me in Toronto a few years ago, will be teaching an Introductory class in my office on Sunday 14 October from 2 - 4pm, and a Level One Workshop later in the month. For more information and to register, please phone her at 416-923-3893.

In the January issue of VisionNews I will announce the names and contact information for the newly graduated Vision Educators. It will be wonderful to have some more teachers in Canada!

Please feel free to share this newsletter with others you think might be interested.

Best wishes to each and every one of you!

Elizabeth

Elizabeth Abraham

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'The health of the eye depends upon the blood, and circulation is very largely influenced by thought. When thought is normal - that is, not attended by any excitement or strain - the circulation in the brain is normal, the supply of blood to the optic nerve and the visual centers is normal, and the vision is perfect. When thought is abnormal the circulation is disturbed, the supply of blood to the optic nerve and visual centers is altered, and the vision lowered. We can consciously think thoughts which disturb the circulation and lower visual power; we can also consciously think thoughts that will restore normal circulation, and thereby cure, not only all errors of refraction, but many other abnormal conditions of the eyes. We cannot by any amount of effort make ourselves see, but by learning to control our thoughts we can accomplish that end indirectly.'

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

CONCENTRATION AND RELAXATION

This is a re-print of an article by Lawrence M. Stanton MD, first published in the April 1925 issue of Better Eyesight, a magazine published regularly by William H. Bates MD. The article has been slightly edited for length.

I know of no writer who has so clarified the murky philosophy of concentration and relaxation as has Dr Bates, and yet the final word has not been said, as he himself would undoubtedly avow.

Therefore, I offer a few thoughts upon the subject which is of the utmost importance to those who are striving for better eyesight.

...If by concentration you mean, as Dr Bates says, doing or seeing one thing better than anything else, you may speak of concentration; but if by concentration you mean, as the dictionary says, doing one thing continuously to the exclusion of all other things then you must abandon the practice as an impossibility.

...Attention underlies concentration, as that word is commonly used, and Ribot's statement of attention is very enlightening. Ribot says that 'the state of attention which seems continuous is in reality intermittent; the object of attention is merely a center, the point to which attention returns again and again, to wander from it often on ever-widening circles. All parts of the object, and then the reflections inspired by these various parts hold our interest by turns. Even when the attention is fixed on the most trifling material object, it works in just the same fashion.' This is entirely in accord with Dr Bates' statement; it is central fixation.

There are, however, two aspects of concentration to be considered - voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary concentration is an effort and, as Dr Bates has so clearly shown, cannot be maintained without fatigue. The highest grade of attention, to which this brief consideration is confined, is involuntary, and involuntary concentration can be defined as 'a psychological equivalent of attention minus effort'. In ordinary attention - that is, in voluntary concentration - our thought holds the object in focus, whereas in

involuntary attention...the object holds our thought without our volition, perhaps even against our will. Spontaneous attention is rooted at the very center of our being, and things that hold the attention captive, as in fascination, fixed contemplation and meditation are instances of involuntary concentration, and...is as effortless as the rising sun - it just happens. There are those cases of miraculous quick cures of imperfect sight by one or another of Dr Bates' methods, where it was enough for the person to see the better course in order to be able to follow it, the idea and its realization occurring simultaneously, without effort...

Involuntary concentration is displayed in the case of Napoleon, who could work for eighteen hours at a stretch on one piece of work without the least fatigue. Napoleon speaks of his various affairs arranged in his head 'as in a wardrobe'. He says: 'When I wish to put any matter out of my mind, I close its drawer and open the drawer belonging to another. The contents of the drawers never get mixed up and they never worry me or weary me. Do I want to sleep? I close all the drawers, and then I sleep.'

The question then may be asked: wherein does involuntary concentration differ from relaxation. If involuntary concentration and relaxation are not always one and the same thing, they often are psychological alternatives and not the opponents we think them.

To regard all phases of relaxation as purely passive is as erroneous as it is to say that concentration of the kind under consideration is associated with effort. Relaxation of the passive kind usually ends in sleep or sleepiness, as experienced by many people after palming. Relaxation combined with action, on the other hand, may also be absolutely free from effort and strain.

In any case, it is the matter of effort and strain that concerns us most, rather than a question of concentration or relaxation. Victor Hugo speaks of the 'calm and intense fixation of the eyes', and surely nowhere is intensity so impressive as in calmness. To be calm is not to be oblivious, and to be intense need not be to strain.

Another thought about relaxation is this: obstacles to relaxation may prove sources of relaxation. An instance of which is found in the noise that is keeping us awake when wishing to go to sleep. If we sufficiently relax, if we accept the disturbance and sleep in spite of it, not only is the obstacle overcome, but it in turn becomes rather pleasantly associated with going to sleep. When again we desire to sleep, we find the noise soothing rather than annoying, and really a source of relaxation instead of an obstacle to it.

...Involuntary concentration without effort is equivalent to relaxation in action. If you can achieve such equilibrium; if you can perform your mental

functions without strain...then 'be my friend and teach me to be thine'.

Editor's note:

I chose this article for several reasons. As those of you who have taken lessons with me know, the concept of 'dynamic relaxation' as described by Aldous Huxley, is central to my thinking and to my work. It seems to me that what Lawrence Stanton is describing as 'involuntary concentration' is an elaboration on that theme, and so it caught my attention. This state, however, is not easy to reach, driven as we are by the need to achieve and to try hard at everything we do. This article describes many of the principles of the Bates Method, and I hope you find it useful.

*The August edition of the magazine **Scientific American** has a very interesting article documenting modern-day evidence of the importance of the saccadic eye movements of which we speak in our work - the movements of the eyes that are the basis of what Dr Bates refers to as 'central fixation'.*

COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

In April, 2006, instead of having surgery, I chose holistic vision training with Elizabeth. Before I came to her, the surgeon told me that my right eye had 20/400 vision and my left eye 20/60 vision. To test my legally blind right eye in a layman's fashion, I sat in the last pew of the church, blocked out my left eye and looked with my right eye at the statue of the Street Madonna that was about 70 feet away. I could not see the heads of Our Lady and the infant Jesus. They were just black.

In September 2006, after 4 sessions with Elizabeth, I visited a holistic optometrist who was surprised to find that my right eye had now 20/80 vision and my left eye 20/30 vision. I did my layman's test again in the church. This time my right eye could see clearly the heads of Mother Mary and Jesus.
V.W-K. - a vision student in Toronto.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: I am in my forties and find that I have to hold reading material further and further away. Friends say that it is inevitable that I will need reading glasses at my age. Is this true?

A: It is possible to learn to see clearly again close up. The improvement is usually more rapid before you begin to use glasses than after you have been using them for a few years, but even then, it is indeed possible to learn to read again without them.