

Improve Your Eyesight Naturally!

by C.J. Wilson, certified Natural Vision Improvement teacher

Our vision. It's one of the most complex functions of the human body. Think for a moment of all the different ways in which your vision helps you function in the world around you, and enriches your life. It gives you the big picture of what's happening around you, allowing you to scan a room, or the landscape. It allows you to work up close, to write a letter or hammer a nail. It helps us to pick out a particular object we're looking for, whether a brand of soup at the grocery store, or a bird in a tree outside a window.

Our vision has tremendous capacity for flexibility and change. When our ancestors spent long days scanning the horizon or woods for moving creatures (which meant food that night), they depended upon clear vision at great distances. Some individuals develop great clarity for seeing at night. A jewelry maker I know who does very fine work has developed the capacity to see great detail on tiny, tiny beads. Our visual system has incredible potential . . . when we make use of it.

For many of us our modern lifestyle has us spending many hours a day doing work indoors, often at close range, with little opportunity to develop our vision's capacity. Many children begin to wear glasses in their early years of school, as they move from a more free, creative, playing environment to the structure of school, with its discipline, thinking, language, math, left-brain environment. Our brain, and eyes, need the balance of both the creative, spontaneous right-brain world and the thinking, analyzing, detail-oriented left-brain world.

"I'm over 40 now. Does that mean my eyes will go down hill?"

"I've worn glasses since I was seven. My eyes are really bad. There's really nothing I could do to improve my vision, is there?"

"My child was born with crossed eyes. Is there anything you can do for her?"

These are some of the questions I get asked as a vision improvement teacher, about the process of improving eyesight. Yes, it is possible to improve vision. Success depends on motivation, awareness, and willingness to change.

Stepping into "The Blur"

Motivation is important because in order to learn to see clearly, one must give the eyes room to change. This means stepping into "The Blur", being willing to tolerate the emotional discomfort of less-than-sharp vision. We do this by either going without glasses or contacts where it is safe and practical to do so, or by wearing reduced-prescription lenses, called transition glasses. Transition glasses allow us to drive legally and safely, and to do our work or other tasks where we want/need to see more clearly. And they allow the eyes the necessary room to change.

When we wear glasses, our flexible eyes become locked into one set prescription, or magnification. The normal eye adjusts to the environment and situations around us. Our vision changes as the situations within and around us change.

You may notice that at times your vision is very sharp and clear. At other times, perhaps due to stress, poor lighting, poor nutrition, or other factors, your vision is less than perfectly clear. When we wear glasses, our eyes become dependent upon them, become less mobile, and often go "down hill" to stronger and stronger lenses. The glasses become crutches.

Imagine what you would think if you injured an arm or leg and the doctor told you that you would have to wear a cast for the rest of your life . . . That's what we're doing when we wear glasses full time! And yet most people never question this practice.

Physical and Mental Awareness

Awareness is central to improving vision. It is important to pay attention to how we hold stress and tension in our bodies. It is also useful to pay attention to our mental programming and conditioning. Do your beliefs and thought patterns work to support or negate clear vision?

How is tension related to vision? Tension causes tight muscles, restricting movement. The eyes have large muscles which constantly move and vibrate the eyes, creating a "strobe light show" on the retina. This information in the form of light is passed along the nerve highway to "control central: the brain. The magnificent, mysterious brain then interprets the information sent by the eyes, and this is what we call vision. If our eyes stooped their fantastic dance of movement, within three seconds we would see nothing. So, gentle eye movement is important for clear vision.

Willingness to Change

Jacob Liberman, optometrist and author of the book, *Take Off Your Glasses and See*, talks about the relationship between our vision and the way we live our lives. Glasses, he says, force us to focus narrowly, losing awareness of the greater picture around us. When we learn to "broaden" our vision and use what he calls "Open Focus", it involves changing more than our eyesight. It involves our whole being. We learn to change blocked neurological and energy patterns, and allow the energy to flow more freely within us.

History of Vision Improvement

Dr. William Bates, an ophthalmologist (medical doctor specializing in eyes) who practiced early in the century, observed that whenever he prescribed glasses to his patients, they almost always returned with weaker eyes. He realized that *glasses were actually making the eyes worse*, although they offered the quick fix of great clarity right away.

Bates observed thousands of patients and theorized that the main cause of visual blur is tension and strain. He developed a series of simple eye activities which helped to relax and

strengthen the eyes and return them to their normal functioning.

There are thousands of people around the world who have learned to see clearly without glasses. The Bates Method has been kept alive thanks to Bates' classic book, *Better Sight Without Glasses*, and a handful of vision educators, mainly in California. The fact that his book is in its 45th printing is testimony to its effectiveness and the reality that many people would like to know of an alternative to putting on glasses.

Dr. Janet Goodrich, author of *Natural Vision Improvement*, expanded upon the Bates Method in developing a series of activities which also switches on the brain, stimulates the imagination, and examines the role of nutrition to vision. Goodrich's background in psychology and natural remedies, as well as studies in Reichian energy work, brings to vision improvement a greater understanding of how our emotions and energy flow affect vision.

Touch For Health offers to Natural Vision Improvement several useful techniques: muscle testing of nutritional supplements which benefit vision, techniques for balancing energy flow in the body, and cross-crawl to switch on the brain. We also muscle test phrases related to vision, on which we can then do emotional release work, affirmations, or emotional repatterning.

How are energy and emotions related to our vision? The visual system is made up of our eyes, nervous system, and brain. All three function intricately together to help us to receive information from the world around us, process it, and react to it.

Imagine this simple scenario: A child wants to throw a ball. First it must see the ball (the eye receives information in the form of light). Then it must process that in the brain (identify the ball as the item which the child is looking for). Finally, she will pick up and throw the ball (using the eyes to judge where to locate and send it, and for balance as she moves through space.)

There are six large muscles on each eye which move the eye rapidly all the time. They allow

their eyes to constantly send light-information messages to the back of the eye--the retina, where our rods and cones are located. The retina is really an *extension of the brain*, as it is made up of these tiny information receptors which race millions of bits of information at a time to our wonderful, mysterious brains.

When we suppress emotions, we close off part of our body's energy flow. Unexpressed emotions can also create stress or strain internally, physically and/or mentally. This can cause tight muscles in the neck, shoulders, and, in some people, in the eyes. You may notice how your vision fluctuates during any normal day, as you move through different situations at work or at home. When you are tired, strained, stressed, how is your vision? In what situations do you see most clearly?

The eye muscles, just as neck or shoulder muscles, can tighten from emotional or mental tension. When they are tight, they are stiff, just like any other tense muscle. And this prohibits them from moving freely, to gather all of the information needed to see clearly. The muscles also affect the shape of the eyes. And when one or more is chronically tight, the shape of the eye may be too curved or not curved enough, affecting the way light falls upon the retina. If the lens is too curved, light will fall in front of the retina, causing nearsightedness; if the lens is too flat, light falls too far back creating far-sightedness.

Natural Vision Improvement is a process of learning how to work with our eyes and energy system, and can benefit all of us -- whether we choose to free ourselves completely of glasses, prevent vision from deteriorating, stay out of bifocals or reading glasses, help keep children's vision healthy, keep eyes and vision healthy and prevent degenerative diseases, and reduce eyestrain and fatigue.

Our cultural programming around vision tells us that our eyes can only get worse, not better, and that as we get older our vision will go downhill. We can allow this to become reality, or we can learn new habits and thought patterns to maintain healthy vision. It does take motivation, though, and awareness, and willingness to change!

Resources:

Natural Vision Improvement, by Janet Goodrich Ph.D. A holistic approach to vision improvement expanding on the Bates Method and including brain integration, movement, relaxation, visualization, creativity, nutrition, emotional release. Goodrich improved her own severe

myopia (nearsightedness) and astigmatism (a "warp", usually on the cornea) as she did research in psychology in the 1970s and 80s. Goodrich is currently working on a book on natural vision improvement for children. Ten Speed Press, 1985.

Creating Your Own Personal Vision by Sam Berne, optometrist. Berne offers many stories of patients who improved their vision, and he explores the relationship between our emotions and vision, the process of self-healing. The book also includes a section on learning and vision, and a set of activities to do for improving eyesight. Color Stone Press, 1994.

Take Off Your Glasses and See!, by Jacob Liberman, optometrist. Liberman tells the story of improving his own eyesight and the contractions between his experience and his training as an optometrist. He explores the relationship between energy and emotions and vision. A list of natural vision improvement practitioners is included. Crown Publishing, 1995.

Better Eyesight Without Glasses by William Bates, M.D., pioneer ophthalmologist who practiced in the 1920s. He noted unexplainable improvement in patients' vision and developed techniques which have helped many people to improve their eyesight. Bates' theories were rejected by the optometrists and ophthalmologists of his day, and only today, in the field of behavioral optometry, are some of his ideas being used and expanded upon.

The Art of Seeing by Aldus Huxley. Another classic on improving eyesight, from earlier in the century.

Vision: A Holistic Guide to Healing the Eyesight by Joanna Rotte, Ph.D. and Koji Yamamoto. An Eastern approach to healing eyesight, based on yoga, breathing, nutrition, and mind/body connection.

C.J. Wilson is a certified Natural Vision Improvement teacher offering classes, talks, and workshops in North Carolina and the Southeast. She began the vision improvement process with vision of about 20/800, wearing glasses all her waking hours since third grade. She now wears glasses only to drive, as she continues on her way to 20/20. She can be reached at (704) 689-5740 for more information on Natural Vision Improvement or to arrange a workshop in your area. Or write to her at 135 Old Bull Creek Road, Marshall NC 28753.