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Better Eyesight

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE PREVENTION AND CURE OF IMPERFECT SIGHT WITHOUT GLASSES

May, 1926

Demonstrate

THAT the long swing not only improves the vision, but also relieves or cures pain, discomfort and fatigue.

Stand with the feet about one foot apart, facing squarely one side of the room. Lift the left heel a short distance from the floor while turning the shoulders, head, and eyes to the right, until the line of the shoulders is parallel with the wall. Now turn the body to the left after placing the left heel upon the floor and raising the right heel. Alternate looking from the right wall to the left wall, being careful to move the head and eyes with the movement of the shoulders. When practiced easily, continuously, without effort and without paying any attention to moving objects, one soon becomes conscious that the long swing relaxes the tension of the muscles and nerves.

Stationary objects move with varying degrees of rapidity. Objects located almost directly in front of you appear to move with express train speed and should be very much blurred. It is very important to make no attempt to see clearly objects which seem to be moving very rapidly.

The long swing seems to help patients who suffer from eyestrain during sleep. By practicing the long swing fifty times or more just before retiring and just after rising in the morning, eyestrain during sleep has been prevented or relieved. It is remarkable how quickly the long swing relieves or prevents pain. I know of no other procedure which can compare with it. The long swing has relieved the pain of facial neuralgia after operative measures had failed. Some patients who have suffered from continuous pain in various parts of the body have been relieved by the long swing, at first temporarily, but by repetition the relief has become more permanent. Hay fever, asthma, sea-sickness, palpitation of the heart, coughs, acute and chronic colds are all promptly cured by the long swing.

Presbyopia

By W. H. Bates, M.D.

PRESBYOPIA, or old age sight, occurs in people after the age of forty. Although the sight may be good for distant vision, it is always poor at a near point. While, in most cases, it occurs after middle age, there are exceptions in which it appears before the age of forty and even in young children.

Generally Accepted Cause

The cause is said to be due to a hardening of the lens, and the belief is that with advancing years the ability to read at the near point becomes much less, because with increased hardening of the lens, accommodation is difficult or impossible. The lens, I believe, is not a factor in accommodation. In my book, "Perfect Sight Without Glasses," [link] I have described the evidence which proves that the change in the focus of the eye is not brought about by a change in the form of the lens.

True Cause

The true cause of presbyopia is a strain or an effort to see. When a person with presbyopia tries to read without glasses and fails, the patient feels that an effort or strain has been made. When this effort to see is increased, the vision, instead of being improved, becomes much worse. One can demonstrate that it is not possible to improve the ability to read fine print by any kind of an effort. When a patient with presbyopia rests the eyes by closing them, or by looking away from the page and then looking back at the reading matter, the vision is temporarily improved. Some people have been cured by resting their eyes at frequent intervals during the day without trying to see. After resting the eyes, the vision is usually momentarily improved. In other cases, it can be demonstrated that the patient is trying to concentrate. Let me suggest that the reader look at the upper left hand corner of a letter F, which is of sufficient size to be distinguished. Try to imagine a small area of this corner to be the blackest part of the F. Without shifting your eyes or closing them, keep on concentrating or trying to concentrate on this one point. Note that for a few seconds it is readily done, but very soon one feels a strain, and that to keep the eyes fixed on this one point becomes more and more difficult. The eyes feel uncomfortable and every once in a while the eyes shift and the upper left hand corner of the letter becomes blurred and is frequently lost altogether. The whole letter, in fact, becomes imperfect and blurred while trying to concentrate on the upper left hand corner. It is usually a relief to look away from the F and think of something else. It can be demonstrated that trying to concentrate on one point can only be accomplished for a short time. In other words, concentration for any length of time is impossible. This experiment is of great importance because persons suffering with presbyopia fail to read because they try to concentrate. Concentration may be all right on numerous occasions, but it is of no value in improving the sight. There are people who are able to help themselves when they find out what is wrong. Knowledge of the true cause suggests the cure. For this reason, some people have cured themselves of presbyopia by just resting their eyes without trying to concentrate.

Treatment

When a patient with normal sight reads fine print, it can be demonstrated that while the letters are blacker and clearer, the white spaces between the lines appear whiter than they really are. If one looks at the letters, the eyes seem to become tired and the vision fails. If, on the other hand, one looks at the white spaces between the lines from one side of the page to the other, it is possible to imagine the white spaces much whiter than they really are without discomfort, fatigue, or loss of vision. Whenever one fails to read at the near point, the attention is not attracted to the white spaces between the lines, but an effort is being made to look directly at the letters. When one regards the white spaces, the whiteness may be improved by closing the eyes and remembering something else that is much whiter, such as white snow, white starch, whitewash. Now, when the eyes are open, the first glance at the white spaces enables one to imagine them whiter than before, but only for a short time, a second or a fraction of a second. Then close the eyes and remember the white as before. When the memory has become perfect with the eyes closed, again regard the white spaces with the eyes open, and note that there are times when the white spaces become intensely white. When the imagination of the white spaces improves, the imagination of the black letters also improves. By continuing to look at a white space, shifting from one side of the page to the other, after the imagination of the white space becomes more nearly perfect, the black letters are read correctly, easily, without any effort or fatigue.

The Thin White Line

When the imagination of the white spaces has improved, it often happens that one can see or imagine he sees a thin white line much whiter than the white spaces, a line which extends from one side of the page to the other, which is located between the bottom of the letters and the upper part of the white space between the lines. The consciousness of this thin, white line is a wonderful help. Most people are cured of presbyopia when they become able to imagine they see this white line. It is bright, clear, and distinct. It gives a restful, pleasant feeling in all the nerves of the body when the thin, white line is seen, remembered, or imagined. In cases of inflammation, when one is able to imagine the thin, white line, pain in the eyes, head or other parts of the body disappears as though by magic.

Failures

There are a number of causes of failures, and this number is oftentimes multiplied when different individuals become able by some ingenious method to bring about a failure. The most common cause of failure is to look at the black letters and to pay no attention to the white spaces between the lines. Regarding the black letters always lowers the vision and requires an effort, a strain which the patient can always realize. Sometimes, the white spaces may be improved sufficiently so that one begins to read the fine print, and almost immediately the vision is lost because of the great temptation to look at the letters.

The thin, white line has been observed by many people who failed to read. In all cases, the white line was forgotten and an effort was made to read by looking at the letters. It seems to be a reaction of the human mind while using the eyes properly for people to at once stop using their eyes properly when their vision improves. They seem to think that they get a glimpse of good vision by the memory of the thin, white line, and all that they need is a start and that they can then get along without the thin, white line. It is the thin, white line that helps people to read and although I may get the habit of cautioning them about looking at the letters, and have them demonstrate immediately that looking at the letters is a bad thing, they find it exceedingly difficult to confine their attention to it. One elderly patient complained that she could see the white between the lines until the letters came out. The improvement in her sight was a distraction and prevented her from imagining the thin, white line. It required some weeks or longer before this patient was able to avoid the strain caused by an improvement in her vision.

Some patients keep their eyes open continuously without blinking. When resting the eyes by closing them, it is not always easy to help the patient to keep the eyes closed a sufficient length of time, or until one becomes able to remember a perfect white. When the memory is perfect, the eyes, mind, and all the nerves of the body are at rest. Rest of the eyes and mind increases their efficiency. When the eyes are open, and the white spaces between the lines are imagined, it is absolutely necessary that they be closed in about a second. Too many patients close their eyes for too short a time, and when they open them they are very apt to keep them open too long a time. It is really remarkable how difficult it is for some people to close their eyes for part of a minute and then to open them for just a second. They seem to forget everything they know as soon as they test their sight. Over and over again, I have had them prove that testing the sight causes a strain which always lowers the vision. Testing the imagination is different and is less apt to cause a strain. A patient with presbyopia can look up at the ceiling or a white cloud in the sky, and remember or imagine a mental picture of a perfect white color, and do it without any conscious strain or effort. Just as soon as they look at the fine print, they forget their imagination and fail by making an effort to see. One might suggest that in the cure of presbyopia, one should first find the principal cause of failure. It is necessary to be on the lookout for more than one cause. Some patients can produce many causes of failure in a short time. The ingenuity they exhibit is often times very remarkable.

After some of my tests, the patients ask questions or make statements which convince me that they pay no attention whatever to my directions for avoiding the strain. Many patients' minds seem to be bewildered by the numerous thoughts that they have about presbyopia, which have been told to them by other people. They have a bad habit of outlining their own plan of treatment, which they may practice unsuccessfully.

A Presbyopia Cure

A patient over sixty years of age came to me recently wearing convex 3.50 D. S. in each eye for distant vision and convex 6.50 D. S. in each eye for reading. Although these glasses enabled him to read fine print, they caused him continuous pain, discomfort and fatigue. His eyes were so bad that looking at the Snellen test card even at a distance gave him pain. Without his glasses, his vision was about 10/40 in each eye.

By looking at the spaces between the lines of black type of the Snellen test card at ten feet or further, he felt no pain; but when he looked at the letters, he very soon was able to demonstrate a strain which blurred the letters, produced double vision and caused him much discomfort. By practicing for several hours, his vision improved until he became able to read the bottom line in flashes at one foot and the twenty line of the Snellen test card at ten feet.

He was given a Snellen test card to hold in his hand at about one foot and was advised to regard the figure 2 in flashes, alternately closing his eyes and resting them. In about half an hour, he became able to flash the 2 at every trial. At first he could see it only for a fraction of a second, but finally became able to see it almost continuously for part of a minute. A card with fine print was fastened to the Snellen test card just below the figure 2 at about one foot from his eyes. By alternately seeing the figure 2 quite perfectly and flashing the fine print for about a second, he became able to see some of the words of the fine print without losing the figure 2.

There have been other patients who have been cured of presbyopia by similar methods.

Stories from the Clinic

NO. 75: PRESBYOPIA

By Emily C. Liernan

FOR some time I have been treating a woman, aged eighty, for presbyopia. She also has imperfect sight for distance which cannot be improved by glasses. This condition has been described by eye doctors as very difficult or impossible to cure. The retina, optic nerve, and all other parts of the eye, are seen to be normal when the ophthalmoscope is used. Recent observations have demonstrated that the cause is due to eyestrain. When the strain is relieved, the vision always improves and the sight may become normal.

Two years ago, when this patient's vision was first tested with the Snellen test card, she read 10/100 with the right eye and 10/70 with the left. She was unable to read fine print with either eye, at any distance. After resting her eyes during treatment, by just keeping them closed, she read 15/30, but some of the letters on the SO line appeared double. Palming relieved the double vision.

Double vision is, of course, only an illusion and is caused by strain. The quickest cure for this is to cover the closed eyes with the palm of one hand, and only uncover the eyes to open them long enough to see one letter of the test card at a time. After doing this, quickly close the eyes and cover them again with the palm of one hand. In this way, the patient does not keep the eyes open long enough to strain or produce double vision.

Later, this patient had a relapse and was discouraged to find that she could not read the test card so well. I soon learned that, although the patient had practiced many times a day, she had been making an effort to see better, and had made her sight worse. At a subsequent visit, she became able to read small print by rereading large familiar letters. Her vision for the test card also improved to 12/30 after closing her eyes for ten minutes or longer. This time she read the letters without seeing them double. From the beginning of her treatment up to the present time, her visits have been irregular and, because of this, it has taken her much longer to be cured.

When most patients grow older, they are very apt to strain more than when younger, and they are not conscious of the strain produced while reading, sewing, or seeing at a distance.

The sunlight helped this patient tremendously. Whenever possible she was placed in the sun, and the sunlight was focused on her closed eyelids with the sunglass. This always improved her vision. When there was no sun, I placed her close to a strong electric light for a half hour or longer. She liked this treatment because the sunlight was so restful to her, and she could read the test card at ten feet.

I have been treating another patient, a man aged sixty-four, with presbyopia. The vision of both his eyes was the same, namely 15/30. He could not read newspaper nor magazine type at all without glasses. When he looked down, he had double vision in the left eye.

Very little could be done for him in the beginning of the treatment, because he had a bad habit of unconsciously staring. He also made a great effort to concentrate while reading or while otherwise occupied. What a surprise it was to him, when he learned that when he tried to concentrate, his vision was lowered. This also produced a great deal of pain and discomfort in his eyes and head, causing a general depression for hours afterward.

I advised him to close his eyes in order to rest them, and to remember something he had seen perfectly. At first he could only remember his pain and discomfort, but by showing him the Snellen test card, illuminated by a strong light and held about one foot from his eyes, he became able to see or imagine the whiteness of some of the halos. Then, when he closed his eyes, he remembered the halo for a moment. By alternately looking at the halo, closing his eyes and remembering it, he became able to flash the halo or to see it for a few moments. By practice, the white halo was imagined

more frequently until his memory became almost continuously perfect.

The pain was soon relieved. It was an easy matter to treat him after that. Blinking became a habit, and he learned to shift quickly and easily. I find that some patients stare even though they do blink often. They keep their eyes fixed in one direction or on one thing. In this way they do not get any relief and the vision does not improve. The normal eye shifts about a quarter of an inch or less while blinking, but it is not noticeable. People who wear glasses seldom shift their eyes. That is the reason why eye-glasses become tiresome to so many people.

At a recent visit, my patient became able to read 10/20 with the test card, and he was no longer troubled with double vision. Closing his eyes often to rest them helped. Now that his distant vision had improved so much, I was anxious to help him to read fine print or diamond type. During one of his previous treatments, I helped him to read newspaper and magazine type, which was an encouragement to him. When the fine print was placed about eight inches from his eyes, he asked: "You don't think I will ever be able to read such fine type as that, do you?" This question amused me, because most patients with presbyopia ask the same question. I answered: "Yes, I know you will."

With a great deal of doubt in his mind, he followed my advice. He was given a booklet, which contains microscopic print, and told to hold it about eight inches from his eyes. Then directly above this print was placed the small diamond type card, which describes the Seven Truths of Normal Sight. Then above this was placed another, a title larger in size, describing the fundamentals of treatment by W. H. Bates, M.D. This card is made up of different sized type, which starts rather large at the top and graduates down to fine reading type at the very bottom of the card. The patient was directed to look at the white spaces between the microscopic type; then blink and shift his eyes to the white spaces of the diamond type; then blink and shift again to the larger white spaces of the Fundamental card. In this way, my patient read sentence after sentence of the Fundamentals until he had read the very small print at the bottom of the card. The patient is grateful for learning how to use his eyes normally.

Editor's Note: The little poem below by James Russell Lowell called "The Fountain" applies to the normal eye. The eye at rest is constantly moving just as the water in the fountain.

The Fountain

Into the Sunshine,
Full of the light,
Leaping and flashing
From morn till night;
Into the moonlight,
Whiter than snow.
Waving so flower-like
When the winds blow;
Into the starlight
Rushing in spray,
Happy at midnight,
Happy by day;
Ever in motion,
Blithesome and cheery,
Still climbing heavenward.
Never away;
Glad of all weathers,
Still seeming best,
Upward or downward,
Motion thy rest;
Full of a nature
Nothing can tame.
Changed every moment,
Ever the same;
Ceaseless aspiring,
Ceaseless content,
Darkness or sunshine
Thy element;
Glorious fountain,
Let my heart be
Fresh, changeful, constant,
Upward, like thee!
—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

The Blind Man

WE are sure that many of our readers will be interested to read about Edith Collins, Edith is a pupil of Miss Elizabet Hansen, a teacher in Chicago, who cures imperfect sight by Dr. Bates' method.

One day Edith and her little girl friend passed a blind beggar on the street and feeling very sorry for him, she stopped and talked with him. Edith had been treated and cured of imperfect sight by Miss Hansen, and had become very adept in applying the method herself, so she began teaching it to the old man. She and her little girl friend visited him twice each week in his hovel, and taught him to palm and use the sun treatment.

He was so ill that much of his time was spent in bed, but Edith told them to move his bed so that the sun would shine directly on his eyes. Little by little his sunken eyes came forward and he began to feel better. He followed the little girl's rules faithfully, even though a visiting nurse laughed and called the method "bunk." After three months, even the nurse must have changed her opinion, as the little girl rushed to Miss Hansen and told her that the old man was cured. She had met him on the street and he could see! He told little Edith he could read the headlines of the newspapers and smaller words in spots and that he was going out of town to look for work.

Miss Hansen wrote us about what Edith had accomplished, but to make it more authentic, we received the following misspelled letter sent to Edith by the old man himself.

Dear edith:

i am in clear water florida i am traveling and you don't know how tickled it made me feel when i could see but when i reached my sister out here she nearly fainted when she saw me, and at first she wouldn't beleave that i could see so she took an apple and held it up to see if i really could see now we are traveling and want to go California i hope you are well and thank you again and again for helping me.

i remain

your patient who was once a blind man.

Big and Little

This is a fact that is sad to tell:
It's the empty head that is bound to swell;
It's the light-weight fellow who soars to the skies.
And burst like a bubble before your eyes.
A big man is humbled by honest praise,
And tries to think of all the ways
To improve his work and do it well;—
But a little man starts of himself to yell!
—Joseph Morris.

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. As by the one, health is preserved, strengthened and invigorated; by the other, sight, imagination and mental efficiency are enormously improved.

Do a little good every day. Tell your friend to blink more often!

STARING: 1 Kings XIV-4,
"But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set."

Effects of Presbyopia
By W. H. Bates, M.D.

PATIENTS who have been cured of presbyopia, which is caused by eyestrain, are able to do more satisfactory work than those who have imperfect sight and wear glasses. We receive many reports from patients who have had difficulties in their special line of work and have found that they accomplished more and were more accurate after their presbyopia was cured. Frequently, people of fifty years or more, lose their positions because of mistakes made in figures or whatever their work may be. They are not always told the reason for their dismissal. They are simply discharged and a younger man put in their place.

One of my patients, sixty-four years old, told me that, after having worked faithfully and steadily for forty years in one place, he had been informed that he could no longer figure accurately. It was a shock to him when he was placed on half pay and sent to another department. He was presbyopic, but was cured by treatment without glasses. During the absence of the younger man, he was temporarily placed in his former position. His work was so accurate and efficient that he was reinstated permanently.

Artists have the same experience with colors. It can be demonstrated that colors, when seen under a magnifying glass, become less distinct. White becomes a shade of gray; black becomes a lighter shade of black. It can also be shown that objects seen through glasses do not appear to be of the same size as the same objects viewed with the naked eye. Many artists are disappointed with their work because for some good reason they feel that it is not appreciated. The great mistake they make is that, like other people suffering from presbyopia, they believe that because their ability to read is improved with glasses, their perception of colors and form is also benefited. It is not always easy to convince artists that glasses actually lower their vision not only for colors, but also for form.

Questions and Answers

Question—Why do animals' eyes shine, and why do they see better at night?

Answer—It is the reflection of the light from the front part of the eye which makes them shine. It is not known why some animals see better at night than they do in the daytime.

Question—Why do Albinos always have poor eyesight?

Answer—On account of the absence of pigment, Albinos' eyes are not protected from the light. However, they do not all have imperfect sight. It is because their mental equipment is imperfect that some have imperfect vision. When the memory or imagination is improved, the vision also improves.

Question—What color eyes are the strongest? I have been told that color matters, why?

Answer—The color of the eyes has no effect upon the strength.

Question—Doesn't it hurt to wear eye-glasses for near-work during the interval of eye practice?

Answer—You should use your eyes correctly all day long, no matter what you may be doing. Practice blinking, shifting, central fixation, and imagining stationary objects to be moving opposite to the movement of your head and eyes. Wearing glasses for any purpose whatever retards your progress and lowers your vision.

Question—What is the movement of the thumb and forefinger, and how does it help?

Answer—Let the ball of the thumb rest on the ball of the forefinger. Move the thumb in a circle, about one-quarter of an inch in diameter. When the thumb is moving continuously, one can imagine that all the nerves of the body are moving with the thumb. This prevents the stare and strain. This movement of the thumb can be practiced when around a room or on the street. When the right foot moves forward let the thumb move in the same direction. Then, when the left foot moves forward, let the thumb move backward. Alternate. When practicing the long swing, the movement of the thumb is a help. When you turn your body to the right, move your thumb in the same direction. When you turn your body to the left, move your thumb to the left. Let the movement of the thumb be a continuous movement.

When you practice the short swing, the slow, short, easy, circular, continuous movement of your thumb in the same direction as the movement of your head and eyes, it helps you to see better, to remember better, and to imagine better.

Question—I am forty-five years of age and have worn glasses for eighteen years. As my eyes have pained me for so long, is it too late to expect help or to discard my glasses?

Answer—It is certainly not too late to discard your glasses and improve your vision. When relaxation methods are employed, the pain disappears and the vision improves. I suggest that you palm for five minutes ten times daily, or more often if possible. Practice the sun treatment for one-half hour, one hour, or longer, every day that you have sunshine. The circular movement of the thumb, as described above, relieves pain almost immediately.

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