

# MORE ABOUT THE BATES METHOD OF NATURAL EYESIGHT IMPROVEMENT

The Bates Method of Natural Eyesight is an educational program in which students have an opportunity to re-learn the correct habits of natural eyesight. This program was presented by ophthalmologist Dr. William H. Bates, M.D. (1860-1931) a well-known and successful New York eye surgeon. His research and facts about eyesight were presented in his 1920 book Perfect Sight Without Glasses.

Dr. Bates stated that errors of refraction (including nearsighted, farsighted, astigmatism, so called presbyopia) and strabismus, are caused by excessive strain in the six external eye muscles. When these muscles are relaxed, they function correctly and change the shape of the eyeball longer and shorter, so that we can see clearly up close and in the distance, respectively, like the functioning of a camera. When, due to stress, the eye is squeezed out of shape by the external muscles, it loses its ability to accommodate, i.e., we lose our ability to see clearly at all distances.

Dr. Bates proved that blur, (other than from diseases and accidents), is caused by a person acquiring improper, subconscious, strained vision habits, which occur during a period of stress. The key to improving eyesight is to relearn proper vision habits all day long-habits based on relaxation of the body and especially of the mind.

**We are told-and our society has assumed-many theories about eyesight that simply do not agree with established facts.**

## 1. "Can eyesight improve naturally?"

(Many people have noticed that vision fluctuates- down and up. Many people notice that vision is worse during periods of stress, fatigue, illness, etc., and better when they are more relaxed, say, for example, in the morning or on vacation. The belief that eyesight cannot be better does not agree with many people's experiences of eyesight. People who keep excellent eyesight are those who do not acquire poor vision habits during periods of stress. The key is relaxation.

(Eyesight cannot improve naturally unless a person relearns good vision habits. Eyesight can improve, but progress depends upon the student's application of good habits. This is why guarantees and promises of improvement can never be

given: it is up to the student to practice the good habits of natural seeing in order to see better.

(Natural vision teachers have watched students improve eyesight for over 85 years. This is not a trivial program. It usually takes from several months to several years for students to achieve the vision they want. Dedication, practice, persistence and patience are necessary. (Are we supposed to accept a theory that eyesight is the only functional part of the human body that cannot improve?!

## 2. "Is old age responsible for deterioration of eyesight?"

(There is some correlation between the type of blur someone has and their age. In industrialized countries, the majority of people who get blur early in life usually become nearsighted; the majority of people who get blur in mid-life usually become farsighted. The type of blur is related to the brain dominance of the individual. In any case, the blurry eyesight is caused by learning improper vision habits-which can be unlearned. Anyone can relearn to do something they used to do perfectly.

Age is not an issue if the person has relaxed, proper habits of vision; in other words, a person is neither nearsighted nor farsighted when he or she maintains good vision habits. (Tom: "Teaching full-time since April 1983, I have watched no difference in the rate of improvement between nearsighted and farsighted students. Usually it takes longer to improve eyesight if the person has a very strong prescription and if they have worn glasses for a very long time.

This becomes a secondary concern, however, when students watch their eyesight begin to improve and realize that they have control over their eyesight.") (Jeannie has taught full time since restoring her own vision in 1989)

(Note that there are people who have never had any blur even well into their 70's and 80's. Dr. Bates stated that the only time we can have blurry vision is when we interfere with our natural clear vision.

## 3. "Is blurry eyesight hereditary?"

(Disease, including eye diseases, can be hereditary, of course. Blurry eyesight, however, is not a disease and is not hereditary. It is a functional problem. That blurry vision is not hereditary has been proven with identical twin studies. If the parents have blurry eyesight, it is likely their children will pick up their poor vision habits. Very often when a parent who is wearing glasses calls me to enroll their children, I tell the parent to enroll. Dr. Bates did a study of the school children in New York. He found that if the parents and the teachers wore glasses, the child would be much more likely to acquire blur.

(Studies of Eskimo villages have proven that myopia is not hereditary. (See *Relearning to See*, by Thomas R. Quackenbush.) (The progressive Optometric Extension Program Foundation states in its brochure, *Rx for nearsightedness, Stress Relieving Lenses*, Essentially, myopia appears to be the response of the

total person to some form of stress." One of the major problems in our society is stress. Blur is a result of stressful vision habits. Many people know this to be true experientially. The key to good eyesight is relaxed vision habits.

#### 4. **"Where is the proof vision can improve?"**

(The famous writer Aldous Huxley (author Brave New World), wrote a Bates natural vision improvement book called The Art of Seeing after improving his own eyesight. He took lessons from natural vision teacher Margaret Corbett, who trained with Dr. Bates. (Dr. Bates lowered the rate of nearsighted from 6% to less than 1% in 8 years in a program for school children in North Dakota.

(Dr. Robert-Michael Kaplan, an optometrist, co-investigated a study demonstrating improvements of visual acuity as a result of relaxation: "...myopic persons could be trained to produce relaxation, which results in sharper visual acuity's..." (Again, is it reasonable that any part of the body can heal and improve- except eyesight, our most important sense perception? (A person can experience immediately his or her own potential vision by making a small pinhole. Cover the eye that sees better with one hand. Then make a pinhole by curling up your forefinger and looking through it. Look at a place that is usually blurry. If done correctly, and if there is no pathology, the person will see more clearly. At a minimum, this vision is available when the external eye muscles let go of their chronic tension. (The "holistic," natural approach of Dr. Bates was rejected by his own colleagues. Dr. Bates and anyone who was interested in his work have been ostracized from the medical community. What can a natural vision teacher tell the established "authorities"? Bates Method teachers succeed because of the truth of their work and the many referrals they receive from students who have improved their sight.

(Dr. MacKracken, M.D., trained under Dr. Bates and taught natural vision improvement in Berkeley, California for many years. Many case histories of improved eyesight are found in his 1937 book Use Your Own Eyes.

#### 5. **"Does reading too much or fine print, computer work, watching TV, etc., ruin eyesight?"**

There are people who do these activities and have excellent eyesight. So, it is not these activities themselves that create poor eyesight. Unfortunately, it is very easy to fall into poor vision habits during these activities. If a person does, he or she will blur their eyesight. Once again, the key is to have proper, relaxed vision habits during all activities.

#### 6. **"Are the eye: healthy while wearing glasses or contact lenses?"**

The eyes are under continuous strain when you have blur. The extrinsic eye muscles are chronically tense, squeezing the eyes out of shape. Many eye doctors know that the greater the blur, the more likely a person will suffer detached retina. The retina is a paper-thin film and is not meant to be squeezed out of shape year after year. Again, from the OPEF, 'Two-thirds of those persons who suffer detached retinas are myopic..... When processes like (radial)

keratotomy or orthokeratology produce improved distance acuity without the use of glasses, they do not change the basic problem of myopia. Neither do glasses and contact lenses. And, The change involves only the cornea, while the depth of the vitreous chamber remains increased, and so does the eyeball length. Thus, the patient still has myopia and remains subject to all the risks of myopia."

(Most contact wearer's endure an uncomfortable phase (especially with hard contacts) when they first begin to wear them. This so-called "adaptation period" is the eye rejecting a foreign object. About 50% of all contact wearers never succeed with adjusting to their contacts in the long term. (People who leave in their extended contact lenses in overnight are 10 to 15 times likelier to develop corneal ulcers than are daily wearers of soft contact lenses.

(Dr. Joseph Kennebeck, O.D., wrote a book in 1969 on the harm of wearing corrective lenses, called why Eyeglasses Are Harmful For Children and Young Adults. He says that if a person who is nearsighted uses their glasses to see up close, they put a tremendous strain on their eyes. Similarly, the farsighted person should never look into the distance with their reading glasses. Unfortunately, people do this all the time. When it comes to our eyesight, ignorance is not bliss.

(The qualities of vision are rarely addressed by conventional authorities. Usually only quantity, e.g., acuity, is addressed. For natural vision students colors, texture awareness, interest, memory, concentration, imagination, and spatial perceptions are also very important. Dr. Bates said that the process of seeing is at least 90% mental. This is why this work is known as natural vision improvement; "vision" includes all parts of our experience: ie: mentally, emotionally and physically

(There is no physical connection between the two eyes. Most people experience blur in both eyes at about the same time. As students improve eyesight, both eyes usually improve together.

This gives us a clue that the problem of poor eyesight comes from the whole body and mind-not just with the physical eyes. Also, Dr. Bates found that many persons were relieved of headaches when eyesight improved. Many students find the neck and shoulder muscles release their chronic tension. **Dr. Bates wrote in the preface of his 1920, "...theories, often stated as facts, have served to obscure the truth... and have caused us to ignore or explain away a multitude of facts which otherwise would have led to the prevention of an incalculable amount of human misery."** Glasses are at best a crutch. Most people experience continual deterioration of eyesight and much discomfort by wearing corrective lenses.

(How much will you pay for eyewear in your lifetime?)

(Since the same poor vision habits that tighten the eye muscles also tighten the neck, anyone who has blurry vision also has chronic neck tension and it can never go away without relearning correct, relaxed vision habits-no matter what else you do. Many headaches are also associated with poor vision habits. Also,

the mind is not being used correctly when someone has blur. No one is healthy who has blurred vision.

## **7. "Do 'eye exercises' work, or, can they keep vision from getting worse?"**

The Bates Method is not about exercises. It is an educational program in which the student actually relearns how to see-all daylong. If a person does some exercises, but fails to integrate proper vision habits into all of the daily activities, he or she will not succeed. The key summary writings of Dr. Bates do not mention anything about eye-exercises. They are not needed. People who have perfect eyesight do not do eye exercises. Vision students do not need them either. One of the most exciting parts of this program is the elimination of the "eye-exercise" approach. Students relearn the same vision habits they use to have when they use to see clearly.

## **S. "Are radial keratotomy and laser surgeries safe?"**

(Dr. Walter Stark of Johns Hopkins says that ads touting radial keratotomy as "safe and effective" are less than frank. About 1 to 3 percent of people have significant side effects. "Every complication listed in an informed consent form"-including the remote risk of going blind" is something that has actually happened." Also, "Progressive hyperopia (farsighted vision, after the surgery) will be the thing that condemns radial keratotomy." Sure enough, a recent magazine states that about 40% of people who had eye surgery to correct nearsightedness a decade ago are now becoming prematurely farsighted. Seeing starbursts around lights is another risk (Since the cornea is cut 90% of its thickness, R-K patients would want to be careful never to have a blow to the head after the surgery. (One magazine says infections from the incisions are perhaps the greatest threat; an infection can permanently scar the cornea or, worse, penetrate and destroy the eyeball. 10% of R-K patients have fluctuating vision, eyesight that gets worse as the day wears on. R-K can leave patients with diminished contrast sensitivity. Long-term consequences for the current variations of this surgery are unknown; long-term consequences for the original surgery were devastating.

Some medical consultants conclude you should resist the ads, especially the mass marketing ads, like ones in the San Francisco bay area, for R-K surgery. (Literature published by a prominent R-K surgeon states this surgery is not experimental; it is "investigational," since the word "experimental" is only allowed to be used with regard to animals! (The FBI agents and Air Force pilot applicants are not accepted if they have had R-K surgery. (The mental and physical strain which created your blur remains unchanged, in addition to the serious risks of still being myopic. (While it is illegal to cut the center of the cornea with R-K surgery, the center of the cornea can be lasered legally. If the center of the cornea is damaged, a person will not see clearly.

(The Natural Vision Improvement Center, and Jeannie Fitzsimmons, certified as a Dr. Bates Method instructor, does not accept students who have had R-K or laser refractive surgery.

**9. 'Why haven't I heard of the Bates method before?'**

From a natural health convention: "**All truth passes through three phases: First, it is simply ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is finally accepted as self evident.**" Like many other fields of natural, holistic health, the Bates method of Natural Eyesight Improvement has been misunderstood, ridiculed, attacked and suppressed by ignorant and financially interested individuals and organizations for over 75 years.

Read Wilks vs. A.M.A

**On a tomb the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Florence was found an inscription that read, "Here lies Salvino degli Almati, Inventor of Spectacles. May God pardon him his sins."**

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