VisionNews

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Dear friends,

Now that the branches of most trees at this time of year are bare, perhaps you would like to join me in one of my favourite vision games - counting birds' nests. This game gets me looking up and into the distance when I walk rather than at the sidewalk right in front of me, occupies my mind with looking and counting so that it does not spin around on unwanted thoughts, and reminds me again and again of the glory of nature as I see the trees silhouetted against the sky.

My 2010 teaching schedule will soon be on the website. I plan to teach workshops in Montreal, Victoria BC, Roberts Creek BC (on the Sunshine Coast), and in Musselman's Lake Ontario. I will also continue to teach private lessons and ongoing support classes in Toronto.

Skydancer is offering a free Introductory Talk in my office on Friday 15 January, and a one-day Beginner workshop the following Sunday in her studio. She can be contacted at 416-923-3893 for information.

Best wishes to you all for a happy season whatever holiday you celebrate, and a healthy, joyful year in 2010!

Elizabeth Abraham

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'My message is peace of mind, not curing cancer, blindness or paraplegia. Peace of mind creates a healing environment in the body. Anyone who is willing to work at it can achieve it, and the first step is understanding - realistically, without guilt or self-pity - how the mind has contributed to the body's ills. This understanding can show you how you must change to be at peace with yourself.'

'To unblock the fountain of love and enter on the path of creative, spiritual growth, we must let go of our fears… To accomplish this 'simple' change we must work through our negative emotions and transcend them. This is impossible until we realize that no one makes us happy or sad. Our emotions don't happen to us so much as we choose them. In fact, our own thoughts, emotions and actions are the only things we really do control.'

'We have an infinite number of choices ahead, but a finite number of endings. They are destruction and death or love and healing. If we choose the path of love we save ourselves and our universe. Let us choose life and love.'

from : *Love, Medicine and Miracles* by Bernie Siegel M.D.

RECENT EXPLORATIONS

I've been having a fascinating time with a couple of new explorations lately. I'd like to share them with you.

A few months ago I read that the Benedictine monks stop whatever they are doing 7 times a day in order to pray. Other religions also have the same practice. Whatever they are doing, wherever they are, they stop to pray. I decided to do the same thing with Palming. Palming is a wonderful way for me to 'come back to myself' and become centred amidst the busyness of life, and I love the comforting feeling of the warmth of my hands around my eyes.

I began by actually scheduling Palming into my day before and after every activity and as a break between segments of longer activities. After about a month I found that I was automatically taking the time since it felt so good and helped me stay calm and productive.

I now Palm at least 10 times on most days. In the morning before I get out of bed and in the evening before I fall asleep, I happily Palm for at least half an hour. Sometimes I listen to books on tape and it's even longer.

Then, between activities I Palm for a minimum of 10 long, deep breaths. I count down from 10 to zero on each out breath. If I have more time I listen to a favourite piece of music instead, or recite a poem in my head to keep my mind engaged while my eyes relax. It takes some creativity to figure out how to Palm in some locations, but that's part of the fun. Sometimes, if there is nowhere to rest my elbows or if it would be disturbing to others to see me with my hands around my eyes, I just close my eyes and remember the feeling of Palming. That works beautifully.

Another activity I've been engaged in is playing with sound for healing. It used to be that the only time I sang was when I was walking down the street alone or with my grandchildren when they were young. The thought of singing in front of others made me so anxious that my throat clenched. It was impossible to know whether a sound would come out at all and if it did, how it would be received.

I discovered that a lot of people have trouble finding their own voice, and wondered whether there was any connection between holding in the voice and holding tension in the eyes.

For many years I have enjoyed humming while Palming, but have always emphasized paying attention to the feeling of the vibration in the eyes instead of being concerned about the sound. Making sounds with an open mouth seems to be more threatening somehow. I am sure there are legitimate reasons for this that date from early childhood.

How can we use sound for healing? I begin by breathing in deeply and letting it out slowly through my mouth while listening to the sound. Then, I allow a sound to come out in the form of a sigh. That feels very relaxing. Next I make whatever sounds want to come. I enjoy the feeling of the high sounds in my head and the lower ones in my chest and belly. After some time there is much more vibration in my chest, and my throat lets go. I am discovering that vocal and instrumental improvisation produced with an intention of healing is a wonderful treat for the well being of my body and soul.

Interested in finding out more? Check out Gary Diggins' TorontoSoundSource website at www.garydiggins.com, or the website of the Canadian Association of Sound Practitioners, www.soundpractitioners.com.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM VISION STUDENTS
(Thanks to everyone for your contributions!)

Hello Elizabeth
Thank you for sending me Vision News. I have now had macular degeneration (wet type) for 9 years. I am 91 years old and very grateful to be independent and still living in my own apartment.

Reading Vision News is interesting and stimulating for me. I enjoy being kept up-to-date on the advances being made in vision education, and I also find some helpful tips.

Impaired vision has necessitated me to slow down , so possibly I am more able to be relaxed and maintain a good attitude.

Abdominal breathing has become a habit for me and I combine it with palming. Most of all, when life seems pretty blurry, I realize I can still look up and see the beautiful blue sky, stars, clouds, and I am much encouraged.

Thank you so much.
J. C.

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I feel like my vision understanding combined with tuning in when I can to the various activities, has contributed to my having a dramatic increase in the number of clear visual moments - shifts I cannot explain well in words. They come unexpectedly and I can best describe them as moments of particular visual acuity and clarity without strain…. Certainly I am now seeing myself in a new light, living with less stress and more presence, pausing for deep breaths.

Also I wanted to share a learning from the last class. You really got my attention when you said that it was all the more important to be mindful of good vision habits with the glasses on. I realize I had associated glasses off with the time to do the habits!

One little everyday exercise I created for myself is when at the wheel. When I am waiting at a stop light I use the time to trace with my eyes the shapes of the cars in front of me, count LED lights or look up and trace or count windows or floors of skyscrapers.'
J. E. B.

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Suggestion from E.Q.
A padded board across the arms of an armchair makes a great, handy Palming device.

Dear Elizabeth
I felt as if I wanted to share my leaf story with you.

This morning I was rebounding facing mirrored closet doors in the daylight - because it is the weekend!

My husband said it was snowing. Well, it was like snow, only it was the leaves which were falling. It was a walnut tree and since we had a heavy frost last night they were coming down heavily - not just one here and there.

Also the sun was shining in such a way that the white chain link fence was glistening and the frost on the grass on further lawns looked like a blanket of light snow. I have never seen the leaves fall like that and to have my husband engaged in this was also amazing - it was truly stunning.

I have noticed the sky has been awesome as well as the clouds, the stars, the moon and basically all of nature!
Thanks for sharing with us
P. L.

DID YOU KNOW?

Laughter, even when you fake it: lifts your mood, melts away mental and physical symptoms of stress, tones and strengthens your body and provides a natural face lift.

Children laugh hundreds of times a day. Adults average about 12 times a day.

10 minutes of hearty laughter burns as many calories as 30 minutes in the gym!

Start catching up on your laughter. Check the website for the Laugher Yoga Clubs in your area. The international Laughter Yoga website is www.laughteryoga.org.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Even though it is said to be the best way to relax the eyes and mind, Palming often leaves me feeling no more relaxed and seeing no better than before I began. I do it the way you taught me in the class, and feel badly for not succeeding. I keep trying harder, but I just end up feeling worse. I feel like giving up. I'm obviously a failure at Palming.

A: I can really understand your disappointment in not experiencing the results you expect. Instead of continuing to try to do it the way you were taught, perhaps you could experiment until you find a way to Palm that actually does help your eyes and mind to relax. You might find that putting a warm cloth over your eyes, exercising vigorously, swinging gently, or massaging your face before you begin helps you relax enough to make Palming feel good.

Perhaps listening to a book on tape, or a particular piece of music, or humming, or lying on a slant board might be relaxing. You might also experiment with Palming for 10 breaths at a time rather than for long periods, or Palming for an hour at a time might do the trick. Whatever we have read, whatever our teacher has told us, the only 'right' way to do something is the way that works for us and produces the results we want. I encourage you to allow yourself to explore, be creative, and enjoy the exploration. And there's always the possibility that in the process of exploring, you will find other ways to rest your eyes and mind and obtain more clarity.