

Seeing.....

With

Magical Eyes



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Seeing With Magical Eyes

This is a book of experiences. It is not an anatomy book.

You are the investigator, the scientist, the artist - the experienter. What you experience as you try out these practices and what you notice about your experiences are what is important. What you gain or learn is in your hands.

Right now, what do you see? Take a look at whatever is there to see. Is what you see vibrant? Do you see differences in texture, in light and shadow? Does what you see seem illuminated from within, vital?

How do you see? What is your actual experience of seeing? Does your seeing seem to push what you see away? Does your gaze bounce off? Is it effortless, what you see flowing in through your eyes? Is there strain, tightness, a hardening of your eyes? When you look at your world do you have a sense that you and the looking and what you see are all there, just one experience?

Seeing is learned. How we see and what we see is affected by the course of our lives - what we've lived, our culture, those we grew up around, our sense of our self. Seeing is fluid; it can change.

We can learn new ways of seeing, which will effect our entire self organization. It's like magic in a way, but it is an applied magic; it is something that needs to be noticed, experienced, and practiced in order to be integrated into our lives. It is similar to the learning that took place as we learned how to walk and talk as children.

The following pages offer practices to learn new ways of seeing. They are like maps to new territories of experience. The territories are there, these maps just help you find it. Try some of them out - start with whichever one piques your interest.

As you do these practices notice what you experience throughout yourself - your sensations, thoughts and ideas, and your emotions. Learning happens in the process of experiencing - the more of your attention you can bring to noticing what actually happens, the more you will learn.

How to do these practices:

Do these practices gently. There should be no strain or discomfort whatsoever. If there is, stop. It might be you can discover a different way to approach it, or it might be that particular practice doesn't work for you right now. Try another one.

These are not exercises, they are small experiments, opportunities for your nervous system to try a new way of organizing. Most of them start with

something for your whole body, to make it easier to get a 'sense' of it, then move to more specifically engaging your eyes and the activity of seeing. The biggest you need do any movement is just enough to know you did it – tiny. It also works quite well to simply imagine, as athletes sometimes do.

There is no need to strive to hang on to your experience as you try these practices out. With each one, your nervous system is introduced to something that may be new. It becomes part of your repertoire, something you can draw upon. Don't let these become another stressful thing you must do or master, just try a lesson, practice it for a time - as long as it holds interest, then let it go. Come back to it if you find yourself going back to old patterns, just to remind yourself of the possibility of seeing with different eyes.

Understanding is over rated. Many of us have learned that we need to understand something before we can act. Most education is based on accumulating knowledge with the intention that this accumulation will lead to understanding and this will somehow be useful. What actually happens is we accept or reject knowledge based on whether it fits with what we already know.

In these practices the point of knowledge is to lead to action. The understanding that then arises comes out of your own experience.

Consider trying these practices out without trying to first understand them. Just do what is suggested to the best of your ability and pay close attention to what you experience. 'Ah hahs!' may pop, but they are not necessary.

Most of these practices will ask that you 'notice', or 'attend', or that you 'bring your attention to' an aspect of your experience. Frequently the way people notice or attend causes them to tense up or get anxious. Be lazy about it. That's right, lazy. Or relaxed, or curious, or calm. When you notice yourself getting tense or intense, back off a bit, let it go, day dream for a moment, then come back to it. Oddly enough we learn best when we are enjoying what we are doing.

You can do these lessons in the order given or skip around; some will help clarify others; all relate to seeing and experiencing the world and yourself in what might be new ways.

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'Unify your effort. No longer see with your eyes, but with your heart and mind. Don't even look with your heart and mind, but with the very energy of your being. Looking stops with the eyes. The mind and heart stop with words and symbols and are restricted by attachment to external things. But the energy of your being can attend to anything.'
-- Chuang Tzu

Sensing your Eyes

We can go for days pushing our eyes out at the world, at all the things we need to see and do and take care of. It restricts breathing, causes eye strain and headaches, and can lead us to feel alienated from all we see.

First, lay down comfortably and close your eyes. Bring your attention to your breathing - just notice how you breath, what moves, how it feels - there's no need to fix it. Then notice what it is like to lay there - your sense of your body, the contact you make with the floor, the room around you. What do you notice?

Now move your attention to your eyes. Are you able to sense the whole orb of your eye or just the front? Feel the shape - the top, sides, bottom, back. Feel the roundness.

Then get a sense of the weight of your eyes. Notice they can sink back into your head as you lay there. There's nothing they need to do, simply rest, relaxed in gravity. Feel your jaw; is it relaxed? Feel your tongue; is it relaxed? Is your face relaxed? Is your throat relaxed?

If parts of you are not able to relax, just notice, no need to worry. You could yell 'tongue relax!!' but that probably won't do much good.

Keeping a sense of relaxed weight, gently roll your eyes to one side, then back to the center. There should be no strain! If there is, you've gone to far. Are you able to move your eye smoothly? Move slowly, gently, so you can notice. Go about a sixteenth of an inch if need be, just enough to sense they are going that direction. Try the other side. Then side side. Keep feeling their weight, their heavy, relaxed weight. Notice your throat, your jaw, your mouth; let them stay relaxed as you roll your eyes.

Then roll your eyes upwards, just a bit; then down, then up and down. Tiny movements, no strain. The point is to discover if, and how, you can move smoothly and without effort. Keep feeling their weight, their heavy, relaxed weight.

Then just feel them resting in your head again.

Come to sitting, then to standing, keeping the feeling of relaxed weight of your eyes. Look around, letting your eyes remain relaxed, weighted, in their sockets.

Over the next few days, every time you think of it, remind yourself of that relaxed, weighted feeling.

Camera Eyes - Searchlight Eyes

Do you let what you see come into you, or do you send your attention out to what you see? They are very different experiences.

Remove your contacts or glasses if you wear them and walk around and notice what it's like to look at things. Notice what you feel around your jaw, neck and throat, chest, pelvis, and feet; in your breathing; and in and around your eyes as you look. Notice how you see; where does seeing happen? Not from a scientific view, in your experience.

Lay on your back comfortably. Imagine you are the sun or a starfish, and as you inhale, 'radiate out' - extend your body outward, gently; not stretching, just extending. Then when you exhale, let everything relax back towards the center. Try this a few times.

Now bring your attention to your eyes. Let them rest in their sockets, giving in to gravity. With each exhale, let them relax a little more.

Look at something directly above you. Let your vision radiate out to it, let your 'seeing' flow out through your relaxed eyes so you 'shine a light' on what you see - as if your eyes are searchlights, shining into the night. Give this a try, then let it go. Then try it again, this time inhaling as you send your seeing out, exhaling as you relax it. Notice what you feel as you do this and where you feel it.

Then let the image of what you see 'fall into your eyes'; let it fall through your eyes, receive it deep in the center of your head, without making any effort. Like a camera, let the light flow in through your eyes to the center of your head. Notice what this is like, how it effects your breathing, the feeling in and around your eyes, your neck, jaw, chest, and spine. Try it a few times - let what you see come into you, softly.

Spend a little time practicing these two ways of seeing. Don't try to 'get it right', just try them on.

As you notice how each of these ways of seeing feels, also notice if different emotions come up. Just notice; no need to do anything with them if they do arise.

Come to your feet and try each of these ways of seeing while standing, looking at different objects. Try it as you walk around.

Try looking with camera eyes and searchlight eyes with a partner if you wish. Do this with someone you feel comfortable with. One partner look at the other, first with searchlight eyes, then with camera eyes. What do you experience as you try these different ways of looking? What is it like to be seen in each of these

ways? Which do you prefer? Which do you find familiar? How might this effect your relationship with your world and with those you meet in your world?

Practice moving though the world with camera eyes or searchlight eyes in everyday situations, just for a moment or two from time to time. Start in easy situations, then gradually begin to experiment with greater complexity. Taking a walk, laying on your bed, reading, watching a movie, or talking with someone.

With camera eyes in particular, go slow, you are literally experiencing your visual world as if it is inside yourself. This may be startling, or threatening in some situations. It might also prove to be very calming.

My thinking about different ways of seeing started on stage in a theater in New York City. I was performing in a dance company, my first time on stage in NY. I opened the show by stepping quickly to the downstage edge then rising up onto the ball of one foot as I extended my other leg up to the side, reached my arms wide over head and beamed out from all my pores. Or so it was supposed to go.

I hated doing it - it felt utterly foreign and fake to me. I could easily see how it fit the choreographer to a 'T'; he could 'beam' with the greatest of ease; it was natural to him.

I didn't begin to understand why it was hard for me until several years later when performing in Dallas with another dance company I was touring with. I was asked to create a solo for a woman visiting from Japan. I sensed a palpable difference in how she approached performing. After a little while I realized that she didn't beam out to the audience, she pulled the audience in.

I started calling this centripetal and centrifugal performing. It was really just a change in how you experienced what you were doing, a shift in attention. Most of us feel more natural doing one than the other. I certainly felt more at home moving my attention inward and bringing the audience with me.

I began to notice this could effect all kinds of experiences, particularly seeing. Do you let what you see come into you, or do you send your attention out to what you see? They are very different experiences. I began to call this 'camera eyes' and 'searchlight eyes' when I started teaching people to use different ways of seeing in their everyday lives.

I've noticed that when I let what I see come into me the distinctions of 'out there', 'in here', and even 'me' drop away. When I send my attention out to what I am seeing it keeps things at a distance, separate. Both have their uses, depending upon the situation you find yourself in.

Increasing Pressure <-> Decreasing Pressure

Stand facing a wall, fairly close to it. Bend your knees, let your hips be over your feet and your shoulders be over your hips. Separate your feet a little, one in front of the other and put one or both hands on the wall. Begin to push on the wall, push from your feet and hips, slowly increasing your pressure. Then slowly decrease the pressure. Go back and forth, increasing, then decreasing the pressure of your hands on the wall.

What is your experience when you increase your pressure? When you decrease? Is one more familiar? What does it feel like throughout your body? In your sense of yourself? Is there any emotional tone that comes up?

You can try the same thing with a partner - stand facing each other palm to palm, hands about chest height or lower, elbows at your sides, knees bent, shoulders over hips, hips over feet, one foot a bit in front of the other. Both slowly increase pressure, then decrease. Try one increase pressure while the other decreases; switch. Notice what you sense throughout yourself. How do you feel when pushing? When being pushed?

Now bring you awareness to how you look at the world. Try changing the pressure of your gaze. Look at something and slowly increase the pressure of your gaze, as if you can press on what you see. Then decrease the pressure of your gaze, let it get lighter. Move back and forth, increasing and decreasing the pressure of your gaze. Notice what you experience in your breathing, your neck and jaw, around your eyes.

What is the usual pressure of your gaze? Is the pressure you use useful? Does it help you concentrate, exert influence, feel separate and safe?

Now combine how you look with pushing on a wall, increasing the pressure of the gaze and the push, then decreasing both. Now reverse the relationship: increase the pressure of your push as you decrease the pressure of your gaze; then decrease the pressure of your push as you increase the pressure of your gaze.

Now combine pressure with camera eyes and searchlight eyes. As you beam your gaze out with searchlight eyes use increasing pressure; then beam your gaze out with decreasing pressure. Is one easier than the other?

Now try it with camera eyes - as you let what you see come into your eyes, let it come in with a sense of increasing pressure, pushing into your eyes. How does that affect your breathing? Now let what you see come into your eyes with a sense of decreasing pressure. Notice your breathing.

Which do you prefer? What in your experience leads you to choose that?

Some people find that decreasing pressure helps lead them into camera eyes, and increasing pressure seems to lead into searchlight eyes (though you can do searchlight eyes with light pressure).

Try increasing and decreasing the pressure of your gaze with a partner if you wish. One partner look at the other, first with a sense of increasing pressure, then decreasing pressure. What is it like to see a person with increasing pressure in your gaze? With decreasing pressure in your gaze? To be seen in these two ways? Which do you prefer? Which do you find familiar? How might this effect your relationship with your world and with those you meet in your world?

Next time you are looking at your computer screen notice the pressure of your gaze and vary it. Try it as you talk on the phone, or face to face with someone; try it as you drive, or walk through a store. Notice your experience and how it changes.

Have you ever felt like the pressure of your thoughts was going to make your head explode? Or become so obsessed thinking about something it seemed you had pushed it right into the ground? Thoughts, thinking, can be 'weighty'.

I began experimenting with the pressure of my attention while I was engaged in a creative process - choreographing, designing the lighting for a show, or writing. I found if I maintained a constant or increasing pressure I soon fatigued and things stopped 'sparking'. I tried decreasing the pressure of my attention, then increasing it again; at first intending changes of pressure then letting the changes happen of their own. It provided a rest and kept me fresh, able to stay with what I was doing without needing to stop and take a long rest.

This works while meditating as well. Often I'd realize I was pushing my attention, and as I did I'd find my mind running wild with thoughts. When I allowed the pressure of my attention to decrease and increase, my mind grew quieter. Useful.

I began to use awareness of pressure with how I saw the world when I realized my eyes were fatiguing from the intensity of how I engaged the world. Modulating the pressure of my seeing, including decreasing pressure as part of my repertoire, seems to open things up, providing a little 'breathing room'.

Differentiating Eyes, Neck, and Torso

Sit or stand comfortably. Turn your head gently to one, then to the other, letting your eyes relax and do whatever they do. What do you notice - in your neck, jaw, upper back?

Now nod your head up and down, like nodding 'yes'. Notice.

Then keep your head still and roll your eyes to one side then the other - slowly and gently. Now up and down. Of course, only go as far as you can go without strain - that means with no hitches, tightness, or stretching. Your skill is what is important here, not dumb will.

Now look at your finger while you hold it directly in front of your eyes, 6" or a foot away. Continue looking at your finger and gently turn your head a little to one side, then return - do this a few times. Then turn your head to the other side and return a few times. Then turn your head from side to side, keeping your eyes looking directly ahead at your finger. (How are you looking? With camera or searchlight eyes? What is the pressure of your gaze?)

Notice you are moving your head around your eyes. How is this different than moving your eyes in your head?

Try a similar experiment, but move your head up and down, like softly nodding 'yes'. Eyes still gazing at your finger.

Then draw a circle with your nose in the space in front of you while continuing to look at your finger. Move slowly. Make the circle round, smooth and round. Are you able to do this and breathe easily at the same time? What happens if you soften in your chest as you do it? If you let your jaw relax, your tongue; if you soften your eyes?

Return to just turning your eyes and head from side to side, keeping it easy. Notice which direction you prefer to turn your head. Next time you turn your head, add turning your shoulders and torso the same direction. Try this several times. Then turn your head, shoulders and torso to the side and pause there. Keeping your shoulders and torso where they are, gently turn your head back towards center, then return to the side. Do this several times. Bring everything back to center then turn to look again. Is it any different? Try this to the other side if you wish.

Let that go and walk around a little. Stop and turn your head to look to one side, then look to the other side. What do you notice as you do this? How do you feel in your neck, chest, back, and eyes? Return to walking, occasionally looking to one side or the other. Notice.

As you sit in front of a computer, or read a book, try similar experiments. Turn your head a little side to side or up down, or make small circles, while keeping your eyes directed at the screen or book. If you are real subtle, you can do it while talking with someone. (you might consider whether you want to indicate 'yes' or 'no'..)

When walking, turn to look to the sides, up, or down. Turn in the way that is easiest for you now. Look at your world, attend to what you experience right now rather than the scenarios running in your mind.

Global Attention - Pinpoint Attention

Stand with a little space around you, with your feet wider than you might usually put them. Expand yourself in all directions - like that starfish in the first lesson. Reach out with your arms and ribs and up with the top of your head while you reach down with your feet; let your whole self spread wide. Then gather yourself in towards the middle or center of yourself; get narrow. Then alternate; spreading wide then gathering in. Notice your breathing, how you feel throughout yourself - what's it like to spread wide? To get narrow? Which seems more familiar?.

Do the same with your vision. Let your attention widen to take in your whole visual field. See globally. Then narrow your focus, pinpoint your focus down to an object in that field. (An easy way to work up to this is to 'set a frame' - use something like a window as a frame and let what is in that frame be your visual field.) Alternate seeing with global attention and pinpoint attention. Again, what it is like to see globally? To pinpoint your focus? Which seems more like how you normally go through the world? Is either one the 'right' way to see, or is each useful in particular circumstances?

Then combine the visual attention with the movement: spreading your whole self with global visual attention; narrowing yourself with pinpointing focus. Notice.

Now reverse it, so as you spread yourself wide you pinpoint your focus; as you narrow you globalize your focus. What is this like?

Walk around and try both ways of attending to seeing - global and pinpoint. When is it useful to see globally? When is it useful to see with pinpointed attention.

You can use global focus and pinpoint focus with what you hear and feel as well.

Combining Different Ways of Seeing

If you wish you can combine some of these practices you've done. There is no need to do this - if it's interesting, try it out. If it's merely stressful don't bother. The point is in your experience - if you discover something new and even useful, great.

You might combine camera eyes and searchlight eyes with global and pinpointed focus. As you gaze at something try:

global attention + camera eyes
pinpointed attention + camera eyes

or

global attention + searchlight eyes
pinpointed attention + searchlight eyes

Combine global and pinpointed focus with increasing or decreasing pressure:

global attention + decreasing pressure
global attention + increasing pressure

or

pinpointed attention + decreasing pressure
pinpointed attention + increasing pressure
Orson Welles as Dr. Mesmer!

If you wish to further differentiate seeing, combine three different ways of looking:

camera eyes + global attention + decreasing pressure
camera eyes + global attention + increasing pressure
camera eyes + pinpoint attention + decreasing pressure
camera eyes + pinpoint attention + increasing pressure
searchlight eyes + global attention + decreasing pressure
searchlight eyes + global attention + increasing pressure

and so on.....

Again, the point is whether these experiments enrich your experience in ways that are useful to you. There is no 'prize' for 'doing it well' other than that.

seeing the space

We don't usually notice space - our attention is drawn to all the things we're involved with that are in the space. But when you start to notice space you soon realize it is quite different than the objects that our attention is usually drawn to.

For one, there is no limit to space, it just keeps going. The space between the bookshelves merges right into the space between the sofa and the wall and that merges with the space outside (as soon as you open the door) and on it goes. Limits are created by the objects in space; like the door and the walls that keep outside and inside 'where they belong'.

As there is no limit to space, you could say it is infinite - it keeps on going until something gets in the way. The objects in the space don't seem to effect the space. But they do effect our perception of space.

There are no dimensions in space either; no up, down, or over there. Dimensions come with the objects, including our own bodies, that inhabit space. Dimension comes with movement, including the movement of our attention. Verticality, up and downness, is a description of a relationship, as is width, or distance. Dimensions are descriptions of the relationship of objects in space.

We see objects in space; what about the space? What do we actually see of space? (seeing space has something to do with global and pinpoint focus) If there is an open expanse of blue sky where you are right now, go outside and look at it (careful of the sun!). If there is not blue sky, or if there are too many clouds or planes or wires, buildings, hills, signs impinging on it, close your eyes and look into the deep blue sky in your imagination.

There will be some limit on the edges of the sky, even if it is just the limits of the circumference of your vision, but forget about that for a moment. Just look into that deep blue sky. Relax your gaze. Then relax your sense of 'you' and 'sky'. You might feel as if you begin to move out into the sky, or as if the sky begins to move into you. At some point you may feel as if you just open, the edges drop away. That's what space feels like.

Our usual experience is that space is bounded by some thing. As I mentioned above, even if that thing is the edges of your vision. One way of noticing that is to think of what we see as volumes - spaces bounded by the objects around them.

Look around yourself and notice the volumes of space. It could be the space inside a doorframe, or between the refrigerator and the wall, or between two slats on a window shade. or the volume of space created by the legs of a chair, or the volume of space between you and someone else in the room.

*How do you notice these volumes? Do you look right at them? What's that like?
How do you look right at empty space? Where does your gaze stop?*

Try including the volume with your seeing of the objects that create the volume. It might be that you experience the volume more as a feeling. Shift your attention back and forth from the objects that create the volume of space to the space itself. Then include both again. What is it like when you include the volumes of space along with the objects in your seeing?

Another way of noticing space is as a field within which exist the objects we normally look at. Open your gaze and look at the room you are in. Shift your attention to notice the space, the field that contains the objects you normally focus upon. What is it like to attend to the field of space rather than the objects within it?

Shift your attention back to the objects. Now pinpoint your focus on one object. What is that like? Open your gaze out to include all the objects. Then shift your attention again to the field of space. Move back and forth. How does the feeling of your experience change as you shift your attention?

See the field of space and the objects in it. Relax there just for a moment.

If you wish, step outside and try it there. It's a bigger field, set a limit on it if you need. Pay attention to what you feel as you shift to seeing a larger field of space; don't go beyond what you're yet able to do comfortably.

What happens in your experience when you include space in what you see?

Density of Space

Each of us has an imagination of space - it's not the same for any of us. This imagination of space is there whether we are conscious of it or not. You can see it in how people move; it's the only way to explain some of what you see.

We think that we think that space is empty. But have you ever noticed yourself 'plowing ahead', as if you were pushing against something palpable, heavy seas or deep snow, even molasses? Can you think of someone you know or people you've seen who move this way? Have you ever moved or seen someone move as if the space invites them into it?

A way to think of this is as density. We can make space more or less dense depending upon how we imagine it. This can be the space outside our bodies, the 'outer space'. Or it can be the 'inner space' inside us, inside our organs, veins, and bones; even the spaces inside the molecules and atoms that make up the 'stuff' of our bodies. How we imagine the density of the space determines how we move, or look, into or through it.

Sometimes we move as if the spaces inside us have all filled up with gravel, we become dense and hard. Or we've become full of a thick fluid, like molasses - movement becomes slow and lugubrious. Do you ever move with a sense the space inside you is as empty as the space you are moving through? What would that be like?

If we are using camera eyes, and the space inside us is dense, what we see 'hits a wall' as it moves through our eyes. When we send our gaze out, do we have to push it out through dense space or does it just stream out, free and easy?

I used this idea of inner and outer spatical density with performers on stage - somehow it gave a different 'feel' to the experiene of watching them. Once I used it as the primary aspect of choreography with a large group of performers in an outdoor piece I created in a vast field on a cliff overlooking a bay in the San Juan Islands. The performer's instructions were to move slowly across this meadow, imagining the space opening before them, like the Red Sea parting, inviting them forward, drawing them forward. It took them over an hour to cross, as the sun set behind them and twilight then night came on. It was powerful, otherworldly, to both experience as a performer and as a member of the audience.

How we imagine the space we inhabit effects our experience. How we imagine the space we gaze into effects our seeing.

Working with spatial density is similar to working with pressure - the difference is in how you experience the space around yourself.

Start with the pushing-hands you did in the 'pressure' exercise. As you push forward with your hands, your partner gives you resistance with their push back - enough so you have to push against them with your hands to step forward. As you step forward, they step back, still applying pressure. Notice what it's like to walk forward, pushing against their resistance. Imagine it's not your partner resisting your forward movement but the space in front of you itself.

Then have your partner gradually reduce their pressure, making it easier for you to advance, until they offer no resistance to your forward passage at all. Notice your experience when you walk forward with no resistance. As you do this imagine it is the space in front of you that is gradually offering less resistance, becoming less dense.

Standing on your own, imagine space is denser than normal, that space pushes back like your partner was. Advance forward through this dense space, like the prow of a ship pushing through the sea. (is this a familiar sensation?)

Then imagine the space opens, like the Red Sea parting before you, inviting you forward, welcoming you forward. The density of the space decreases, you move into open space, no resistance. What is that like?

I once read that native american runners who were traveling great distances would use something like this technique, particularly when going up hills. Maybe it was true, no way to tell. But I've tried it out when hiking - it really seems to make it easier.

Now try this with your gaze. Look out thru dense space, space so dense you have to plow your gaze through it. What is this like?

Then let the space open, inviting your gaze, so your gaze moves freely to what you see. What do you notice? In your chest, your breathing, or around your eyes?

Try combining a sense of the density of space with other ways of seeing:
With pinpointed focus; with global focus.

Reach out with your eyes, like a searchlight, then let what you see come to you, like a camera, as you look through dense space, then through space offering no resistance;

Combine the density of space with pressure - increase the pressure of your gaze as it plows through dense space, then decrease the density as you continue to increase your pressure. What is that like? 'I can see for miles and miles.....' Now decrease the pressure of your gaze as the space becomes more

dense, then decrease the pressure of your gaze as the space becomes less dense. Notice.

Experiment with your experience of the density of space as you move through your day - with seeing, and with your sense of moving through space.

Flow: Freeing Seeing - Binding Seeing

Seeing is an ongoing movement of light, bouncing off what we see and flowing into our eyes. Seeing is not a 'kodachrome moment', frozen and done.

'Flow' can be described as having two poles: flow that is unrestricted, free; and flow that is bound. Seeing, indeed any movement, is always fluctuating between one pole and the other.

'Binding flow' is not bad, nor is 'freeing flow' good; each is useful, depending on your intention and the situation you are in.

[Think of traffic at an unmarked intersection; if you're prudent, you 'bind' the free flow of your car as you approach, then free it as you see you can move through]

Close your eyes and imagine something that flows, say, a clear stream flowing over stones or a flag rippling gently in a breeze. Feel the stream or the flag moving in yourself.

Do a simple movement with that sense of flowing; ie, reach for something as if to touch it. Notice what that is like. Then do the same movement but restrict the flow of it. Notice what that is like.

Place something small on the floor, like a pin for instance, then reach and pick it up. Notice your reach flows more freely until you near the pin, then as you slow down to pick it up and hold it the flow of your movement binds a little. Try this several times.

Recall the traffic at an unmarked intersection; the binding and freeing of the flow of cars as they move through it. Then move around the room, freeing and binding the flow of your passage.

Now look at different things around you with the same sense of binding then freeing the flow of seeing. Do you bind your seeing as you look at an object, then free your seeing as you look away and around? Try it the other way around, freeing the flow of your seeing as you look at something in particular, then binding your seeing as you look around.

Walk around as you practice freeing and binding your seeing. Notice your experience, particularly the sensations in your body.

You can also experience freeing and binding the flow of movement in the area around your eyes.

If you habitually bind the movement of your eyes it will create tension in the muscles throughout your body.

Pinpoint focus frequently is done with binding flow (though it needn't be). If you go through life with pinpointed attention you can get bound up. Freeing the flow of your attention as well as frequently shifting to global focus and camera eyes can free the movement of the muscles of your eyes and whole self.

Pinpoint focus is not just external; thinking can be a continual sequence of pinpointed foci. 'Freeing the flow' of how you attend and 'globalizing your attention' can provide recuperation from too bound and narrowed a focus.

Look at your finger, then look at something far away. Notice as you look at your finger your eyes move towards each other, as you look further away your eyes roll apart. Do you experience this as a 'free flowing' movement, or is it 'binding flow'?

Contracting a muscle does not have to be done with 'binding flow'; it's possible to contract a muscle with 'freeing flow' It is after all just a movement.

Reach for that pin again; notice the binding and freeing of your flow of motion.

Again, look from your finger to something far away with a sense of freeing flow as your eyes move apart then together.

Notice that even as you look from near to far, moving your eyes to focus, light is still flowing into your eyes. It can move freely or you can bind your experience of it.

Notice the area around your eyes, the muscles, tissue, spaces. Move your eyes gently, to the side, down, up; notice if the area around your eyes has a feeling of being bound or free.

Move your eyes with a sense of 'free flow' in the area around them. Then bind the sense of flow around your eyes. Alternate. Notice your breathing and the rest of yourself, as you bind and free the area around your eyes.

Walk around, notice if you can experience a sense of the area round your eyes freeing and binding as you look at different things.

Foveal vision - peripheral vision: a movement of attention

Foveal vision is what we see in the middle of our visual field; peripheral vision is what we see at the edges, the periphery of our visual field. Peripheral vision is black and white and shades of grey. Foveal vision is in living color.

We are usually far more attentive to the foveal area of our field of vision and may have little awareness of the peripheral part of the field - especially if wearing glasses, where we learn to ignore the peripheral part of the field.

Peripheral vision has it's uses,,, else we wouldn't have it. It's particularly useful when walking, for balance and noticing changes in the surface we are walking upon.

You can do this practice sitting, standing or laying on your back.

Notice your breathing - let this be the focus of your attention.

Then notice other sensations you are feeling, the temperature on your skin, the pressure of your body on the floor, or your sense of the space around you.

Return the focus of your attention to your experience of breathing, then include the other sensations in your attention as well. Consider them the periphery of your attention, or background. Then move your attention back and forth, from the foreground of your breathing to the background of pressure, temperature, space, or whatever else you noticed.

Add what you hear to your awareness. Breathing is still the focus and what you hear joins the background with the peripheral kinesthetic sensations. So you maintain focus on your breathing and include your other kinesthetic sensations and what you hear in your attention.

Now experience breathing, hearing, and other kinesthetic sensations as a field of experience; then shift the focus of your attention from one to another, the other sensations moving to the periphery.

Add what you see. So, breathing is still the focus of your attention and what you see joins the periphery - move your attention from breathing, to other kinesthetic sensations, to what you hear, to what you see then back to breathing as the focus.

Let all that go.

Stand or sit in front of a window, so the frame of the window provides a frame around a visual 'scene'. Pinpoint your focus on something within that 'scene'.

Now include in your awareness the rest of the visual scene framed by the window.

As you maintain your visual focus on whatever you chose in the scene, move your attention around the periphery, to the right, the left, up and down, around the edges. Notice that as you move your attention in a direction your peripheral vision in that direction may start to fill in. Let your attention return to the center of your focus from time to time.

Keep your looking soft, perhaps even move between camera and searchlight eyes. Extend your sense of time so there's no hurry.

Now choose another field of vision, perhaps look at a wall. Focus on something in the center of that field, it could be a pin in the wall. Extend your arm towards that point, then slowly move it towards the side until it is just at the edge of your visual field. Slowly move along the edge, then towards the top or bottom of the field. Keep exploring right at the edge of the field. Your eyes remain softly focused in the center of the field.

Change your arm and explore the other side.

Where does your hand tend to drop out? Are there places on the circumference of your visual field that you have less awareness of the periphery? Keep exploring their gently, perhaps you can reinclude those areas in your visual awareness.

Then maintain your visual focus, both the center and the periphery, as you include other sensations. Add your breathing in your attention; then whatever else you notice of what you feel; then what you hear.

Move your attention from your visual focus, to the periphery of your visual field, to your other sensations. Back and forth.

Notice that you can hold several things in your attention and move the focus of your attention between them. Either attending to the central focus and moving attention to different sensations in the background or continually shifting foreground and background. With ease.

As you move through your life, from time to time notice what your attention is focused on, visually, auditorially, kinesthetically, or what you are tasting or smelling. Then include some of the other sensations that form the periphery of your attention. Move your attention from the focus to the periphery and back. Notice what you experience.

Eyes Lead

Stand comfortably. Look to one side, as if watching someone walk by, let your whole body follow your eyes, so eventually you are turned half way around, maybe taking a step or two. Then imagine someone going by the other way; follow them with your eyes and the rest of yourself.

Imagine a bird flying up and over your head; a 'bee' flying towards you and diving through your legs - follow them with your eyes and the rest of yourself. Lead with your eyes and follow with your whole self.

Notice if you hold back with parts of yourself; how can you let those parts join in? Your 'seeing' shapes your whole body - your whole self is molded by your intention to see whatever you are watching.

Unless you have other underlying, probably unconscious, intentions going on at the same time - such as 'must keep chest thrust forward', 'must hold belly tight', 'must tuck tailbone under', and so on. These underlying intentions get in the way of what you are intending right now. What do these have to do with watching a bird fly by?

Come back to looking to one side. Let your eyes lead to one side as if following something, only going as far as is comfortable, then let your head turn, again only as far as is easy, then your shoulders, chest, and back, then your hips, until it is natural to step that way. So you are consciously recognizing a sequence of movement involved in the action of following something with your eyes. Try this several times, to either side.

Then walk by something and look at it but keep walking, letting your intention to keep your gaze on it shape you as you go by, until you either stop and go towards it or let it go.

As you move through the world let your eyes lead you to things; see a flower and turn to it, then reach forward with your nose, your head, your chest and belly and back, with your whole self and smell it. When you see something that catches your attention, let the seeing of it change how you move, let your attention, your interest, organize you. Let the moment you are in organize your response, bring yourself to right now.

Sensing space visually and kinesthetically

Lie on your back, eyes closed. Sense one arm, it's weight, it's shape, it's contact with the floor, it's length, circumferences, it's density. (When you 'feel your arm', where do you feel it?)

Now sense your torso in the same way - the weight of your torso, the shape, how you contact the floor, the length, circumferences, the sense of density.

Notice the space between your arm and your torso - How wide is the space? How long? How thick?

Move your arm out or in, then feel the space again - how has your experience of the space changed?

Sense your whole self for a moment - feet and legs, hips, torso, hands, arms and shoulders, your neck and head. Then move your attention to the space around you. How far does the space extend? What is your sense of the space that is close to your body? What is your sense of the space further away? Notice the space to the sides of you, above your head, and below your feet. In what areas is your sense of space vivid? Where does it fall away or get vague?

Move your attention to the space within yourself; the spaces within organs, bones, veins; the spaces between molecules, within atoms. Feel the vastness inside yourself.

Move your attention from feeling interior space to outer space, then back in again; notice your sense of the boundary between.

Sit with your eyes closed; feel the space around you and within you. Open your eyes slowly, see the space around and between the objects in our visual field. (Do you normally just see objects - the chair, the wall, the carpet - and ignore the space?) Feel the space as you see it. (What does that mean to you? It needn't be precise, or explainable.) Close your eyes again, still feeling the space. Open them again and see the space as you continue to feel it.

Stand, eyes closed, and sense the space around and within you. Open your eyes as you continue to feel the space - see the space around and between objects as you feel it.

Look out the window, see and feel the spaces.

Walk, see and feel the spaces changing as you move. Feel the spaces moving within yourself.

Sensing objects visually and kinesthetically

Lie on your back, eyes closed. Feel your whole self, your weight, contact with the floor, your shape, dimensions, your density. Feel the space around you; feel the density of the space.

Then feel one arm, it's weight, it's shape, it's density, it's contact with the floor, it's length, it's circumferences. Feel the space surrounding it. (Where do you experience the feeling of your arm? In the arm? In your head? Your belly or chest?)

Now experience the feeling of your hand.

Then hold your hand in front of your face, eyes still closed, feel your hand's weight, temperature, size, location in space, then the space surrounding it.

Using camera eyes, slowly open your eyes while continuing to experience the feeling of your hand. See it as you feel it, letting the seeing of it just flow in through your eyes. Close your eyes again, continue to feel your hand as you see it in your mind's eye. Open your eyes, continue to experience the feeling of your hand as you see it. Go back and forth until you can feel your hand as you see it.

Add feeling and seeing the space around your hand; the space that provides a place for your hand to be.

Sit up, eyes closed, and feel yourself sitting - feel your weight, contact, shape, density; the space around yourself.

Then feel the presence of what is around you - the space, the shapes and densities and distances of people or objects.

Using camera eyes, open your eyes and see something or someone in the room. Feel what you see, it's shape, density, contours, inside yourself as you see it. Let what you see inform what you feel, the texture, the lightness or density, the sense of weight and shape; let what you feel inform your seeing. Notice the space surrounding the object of your attention and feel that as well. Notice the space between you and what you see - what is the feeling of that space? Go back and forth, eyes open, eyes closed.

Use global or pinpoint attention; increase or decrease the pressure; bind or free the flow.

Expand your focus and include several things in your attention - feel them as you see them. Include the space between and around them, their relationship in that space, and feel the space between them and you.

Globalize your attention and see and feel the whole scene, the objects and the space. Notice your sense of the objects and the spaces between - it can be palpable.

Walk - see and feel what is around you, the space and relationships constantly changing.

Include your sense of yourself walking, the space changing around you, the ever-changing relative densities of you and what is around you, your changing experience of the space you inhabit together.

Shaping vision

What we see shapes us internally, to a greater or lesser degree, whether we are conscious of it or not. To a great extent, our 'interior landscape' mirrors what we see and feel around us. The more we allow ourselves to be moved internally by our visual-scape, the better our vision; and our sense of involvement with what we see increases dramatically.

Close your eyes and move one hand over your face, touching it gently - notice what you actually experience - what is hand, what is face? Feel what your hand feels and what your face feels simultaneously. Notice the tactile sense of it. Bring that tactile sense to the next few experiments.

Stand easily, with your feet comfortably apart. Let yourself rise up, just let your whole self go up a little. Then let your whole self sink a little. If you like, you can go up on the balls of your feet a bit as you rise and bend your knees a little as you sink. Make it as large as you wish, as long as it stays comfortable and you're not straining to balance.

Now shrink it, try it small, just an interior sense of rising up, then sinking.

Feel what happens inside as you rise, then sink. Notice it creates a sense of 'up and down-ness' in you.

Look around and notice the 'up and down-ness' of what you see -notice how that can be felt inside of you if you allow it.

Now experiment with widening and narrowing. Reach out wide in all directions, then pull everything in, get narrow. At first let it be fairly big in space, then more internal. Again, notice your experience - what does it feel like to be wide? to be narrow? do you believe one is 'better' than the other?.

Look around and notice the wideness or narrowness of what you see - notice how that can be felt inside of you if you allow it.

Now bring your attention to your experience of going forward and backward. You can travel with this if you wish. Move your whole self forward, then your self back. Then make it smaller, more internal, moving forward, moving back. Do you go forward with a sense of freedom, or are you pushing against space that seems dense? Is going back frightening or does it feel pretty good? How do you know; what lets you know if it is a frightening or comfortable experience? What are the sensations of forward and back?

Look around and notice the depth of what you see - notice how that can be felt inside of you.

Notice if some of these feel familiar to you and others are foreign.

These three dimensions, up and down, side to side, and forward and back, continually combine and recombine to create your experience of the shapes of things. The dimensions are not abstract geometric ideas, but palpable experiences, maps that connect our inner and outer worlds, that most of us learn early in life but often lose as our three dimensional movement becomes increasingly curtailed.

Try combining the dimensions: get wide as you rise; become narrow as you sink. Notice your experience. No need to judge it; what you experience is what the experiment brings to your attention.

Then widen and rise as you move forward. Enclose, sink, and move back. Feel how this shapes you internally.

Stand comfortably, with eyes closed if you wish. Slowly change the shape of your self - it could be a shape like you make while reaching to get something off a shelf, or it could be like a sculpture you've seen, or you could just make it up. Feel the movement of shaping yourself, sense your changing experience as your shape changes. It can be a small or big change of shape; it could be mostly internal or the shape of your whole body could change. Notice what it feels like inside of you - as you change the outer configuration of your body, your interior is changed as well. How do you feel with that?

Open your eyes and look at something you find pleasing. Feel what you see. Notice that what you see subtly shapes you inside, if you let it in.

Three dimensional seeing is increased by allowing an internal kinesthetic experience of what we see. 'Seeing' is an interaction of our visual and kinesthetic senses. What you see is experienced kinesthetically, unless you have learned not to feel it. When you allow yourself to be shaped by what you see, your visual experience becomes richer, even sensual. 'Inner' -'outer' distinctions decrease; what you see is inside and outside of you. 'You' moves to what you see and what you see comes to you. Seeing takes on a tactile quality, caressing. Your visual world becomes palpable, more vivid and alive.

We can experience many things from doing these simple practices. Some people experience a change in the clarity of their seeing - colors are more vivid, shapes have more three dimensionality, textures jump out, and light and shadow have more intensity. Others gain a greater sense of ease in their experience of seeing their world, seeing becomes less strained.

Some people notice that the way they have been looking at the world has removed the life from what they see, and that there are ways to see that enliven what is seen, as well as bringing life to the seer, to the experience of seeing itself. As they begin to see the vitality in the world they feel more vitality in their own being.

Some have noticed there are ways to see the world that increase the sense of separation of seer from what is seen, and other ways remove the separation, so there is no sense of 'me' looking at something but just the experience of seeing. They feel more at home in the world they live in.

