

Only the heart can truly see

To see your eye's blind spot, try this famous but simple experiment:

R

L

Instructions: Close one eye and focus the other on the appropriate letter (**R** for right or **L** for left). Place your eye a distance from the screen approximately equal to 3× the distance between the **R** and the **L**. Move your eye towards or away from the screen until you see the other letter disappear. For example, close your right eye, look at the "L" with your left eye, and the "R" will disappear. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_spot_\(vision\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind_spot_(vision))

We are all often partially blind. Sometimes we are blind even while looking with wide open eyes. We think we are really seeing the world, but the reality is that we are missing something, those things that really matter. Often what we miss seeing are what we really need to see that would change our lives for the better.

Whenever our eyes are open in the light, it falls on the retina. Nerve cells called photoreceptors relay the light (images, colours, etc) as data to the brain, which it interprets into what we see. But there is a small blind spot in our retina where there are no photoreceptors. How is it then that we never notice the blind spot? It is because our brain is very good at guessing what should be there, and it automatically fills in the blank. Sometimes we know what we want to see and our brain turns that wish into a kind of virtual reality for us.

This means that some of the world that we see or live in is really just an illusion, our own mental projections and the imaginings of others. We may not realize how terrifyingly vulnerable this makes us until it is too late. When we are in love with someone, for example, we tend to be blind to all the person's fault. When we dislike someone, we are likely to see his faults more easily, or find something to blame him with.

Religion further complicates the way we see things even more severely. Most of religious faith is wishful and imagined. If we are forced to believe without knowing, then that faith is only preventing us from knowing. Hence, faith is said to be not wanting to know.

In this way, religious teachings that demand our full faith without question simply wants to broaden our blind spot over some of the most important areas of our lives. If we are able and willing to see these spaces of wisdom in our lives, then we will understand what's right, what's wrong, and what's good, what's bad. If we allow others, especially religiously imaginative people to decide for us what's right or wrong for us, or what's good or bad for the world, then we have really blinded ourselves.

So how do we uncover our blind spots? How do we ever fully see the truth that is right before our very eyes? A good place to start is to simply open our minds, embrace our hearts. The French philosopher, Henri Bergson (1900-1945) is often misattributed to have written, "The

eyes see only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.” George Potter, in *The White Bedouin* (2007:241), however, attributes the quote to Canadian man-of-letters, Robertson Davies (1913-1995).

Even when memorable quotes are misattributed, their import for us serves just as well. The eye sees only what the mind tells it to see. However, if we have a wholesome heart, it will free the mind to free the eye to truly see what is before us.

To some extent at least, we now understand that we do not see only with our eyes. It is vital to be able to see with our heart. Seeing with our heart is looking at life with clarity, empathy and, above all, a willingness to learn and to love. Indeed, we can never really learn if we lack love. For, to love is to lose yourself in your passion. It applies to a relationship as well as to learning.

A love relationship is, in fact, a very focussed way of learning. We need to love learning as we love people, and love people as we love learning. If we understand that the two are really close, then we will simply keep falling in love, we keep staying in love.

True love begins with accepting ourselves unconditionally. This is the most important person we need to spend time with, time and again. We need some occasional quiet time away from life's noises and nudges. We must find that sometime place or that spacious activity that opens a door or a window of inner peace so that we can just listen to ourselves. This is a great way to heal ourselves of our daily wounds so that we are more helpful to others, loved, unloved or yet to know.

We begin this personal quiet time by looking at ourself, reflecting on whom we really want to be. Do we want to be someone who is angry, reactive, mean, and unfeeling to the world around us and the needs of others, or do we want to be someone who is calm, peaceful, helpful, and wise in our actions, thoughts and feelings. The choice is clearly ours. Each and every day, each and every moment, we are free to make that choice of whom we want to be.

As we look at ourself, we must be willing to be, to change. Ask, in that quiet place inside us, how to make that change. Be willing to laugh at ourself, at least gently smile. Laughing or smiling at ourself is a great way to open our heart to greater self-acceptance and other-regard.

Learn to “see” with all our senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. Our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are the doors of self-knowledge. Indeed, they are our world. We now need to feel what we see. To feel is to directly see the world of our senses. When we see and feel unconditionally, we emanate a safe heavenly aura wherever we are.

This is called lovingkindness. But don't take the word for granted or be limited by our own thoughts. Lovingkindness frees our thoughts, like sandbags and ballast jettisoned from a rising hot air balloon. Try lovingkindness, and see how we rise above ourself. From the heights of our heart, we see and feel ourself with joyful surprises.

What may appear as a barrier or a tragedy becomes a blessing to us. What may appear as rejection may actually be a safety valve diverting us from something we have yet to learn about. In Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's children's book for adults, “The Little Prince” (originally in French, 1943), there are these moving words:

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

"It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."

"It is the time I have wasted for my rose --" said the little prince, so that he would be sure to remember.

"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose..."

"I am responsible for my rose," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

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