

**EYES OK
I'M OK**

HAROLD WIENER, OD

OPTOMETRIC EXTENSION PROGRAM FOUNDATION

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Optometry is the health care profession specifically licensed by state law to prescribe lenses, optical devices and procedures to improve human vision.

Optometry has advanced vision therapy as a unique treatment modality for the development and remediation of the visual process. Effective vision therapy requires extensive understanding of:

- the effects of lenses (including prisms, filters and occluders)
- the variety of responses to the changes produced by lenses
- the various physiological aspects of the visual process
- the pervasive nature of the visual process in human behavior

As a consequence, effective vision therapy requires the supervision, direction and active involvement of the optometrist.

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Preface

This book has been written because of the tremendous need that exists to help children having problems meeting the many demands of the classroom.

This book is for those people instrumental in helping children develop. It is my purpose to share the understandings and activities developed by optometrists so that other professionals and parents will become better equipped to provide to children the direction and guidance needed to help them effectively meet the classroom and social demands placed upon them. All children, whether they are having difficulty or appear to be doing well, can benefit from the understandings and activities described in this book. In addition to children, adults can also benefit from the understandings described in this book, as age alone is not a factor in the development of performance skills. They can be developed at any age.

My aim, and that of other developmental optometrists, is to help people develop the processes necessary to function more effectively in our culture. While the culture demands achievement, it is unfortunate that this achievement is at almost any cost to the individual himself. People are measured by how well they meet goals and the end result of their work—the *product*. We all agree that the product, or end-result, is important; however, our point of departure from traditional thinking is in how the product is attained. We are concerned with the *process*. The developmental optometrist is process-oriented. He wants to help people develop more effective ways to perform and achieve so that they will not become physically, emotionally, or visually handicapped.

For over 80 years, developmental optometrists all over the world have been helping people achieve more effectively.* This has been done by changing the process (the way) by which people achieve, from a laborious, time consuming, and inefficient manner, to a spontaneous, quicker, and more efficient manner. Our success in helping people is outstanding. The measure of our success is not only in terms of a reading test or achievement test, but also in the attitudinal and the ease-of learning changes which take place in children and adults who have participated in optometric training.

Some of the reported and documented changes that result from optometric training are:

1. Increased self-confidence.
2. Improvement in school performance: reading, writing, arithmetic, handwriting, spelling, and subjects where these skills are applied, such as social studies and science.
3. Longer attention span.
4. Improvement in responding to instruction.
5. Improvement in following directions.
6. Interest in reading for pleasure.
7. Improvement and participation in sports.
8. Getting along better with friends.
9. Working nearer potential.
10. Improvement in personal habits.
11. Increased ability to communicate needs and wants.
12. Less inner tension.
13. Decrease in hyperactivity.
14. Improvement in work and study habits.
15. Less time spent on schoolwork without sacrificing grades.
16. Improvement in comprehension.

Vision and the visual process is the least understood of all body processes. It has been the experience of developmental optometrists that even the most sophisticated people know very little about the visual process and how vision works. Most people (professionals and laymen alike) think only of visual acuity and healthy eyes. While these two factors are important, there is much more about vision that will be explained in this book. Vision is a process that involves the integration of all systems of the body. In order to accomplish this integration, it is necessary for all systems to work freely, smoothly, and without tension. For a vision system that works in harmony with the rest of the body, many skills must be developed. As you read subsequent chapters, you will see how instrumental the process of vision is in providing and maintaining body harmony.

Another concept that is not generally understood about vision is that it is an automatic process. Vision is not a passive process. It is an active one in which it is necessary for a person to move his eyes to look, to locate, to focus, and then to integrate the information with other body systems. It is the whole body in action working to arrive at an appropriate action in response to an external visual stimulus. Integrative learning takes place when vision smoothly, automatically, and efficiently triggers the entire action system of the body into play. The "action system," comprising other systems of the body involved in this process, includes the general motor system of the body (the muscles) and the language system (speech, hearing, and inner language). The procedures that you will read about have to do with the use of the muscular system of the body, the use of the eyes, and language.

Whoever works with children must be honest, straightforward, and loving. The language used must reflect these characteristics so that the child will respond without fear. The child must be likewise "open" inside himself so that he can benefit from the procedures that are described. This attitude is necessary because something is not being done to the child. He does something within himself. It then becomes necessary to understand how to communicate with the child so that he is kept open and responsive. My concern is to help children learn how to process visual data by leading, not driving them.

The activities described in this book are a starting point for more advanced work. By using this book and by working together with a developmental optometrist children can be helped to function at unbelievable levels. The optometrist in his program of optometric training uses lenses, prisms, and specialized training devices to develop specific aspects of the visual system such as binocular vision, focus flexibility, and fusion ranges. He also provides a visual evaluation that encompasses all aspects of visual performance at both distance and near. An eye examination that just investigates a child's ability to see clearly is not adequate. Only an in-depth optometric evaluation, which allows time to discuss the results with the parents, can determine how a person processes visual data and what has to be done to increase his effectiveness.

Too many children have the will to succeed, but not the skill. This book tells how to develop the skill and improve the will.

*The Optometric Extension Program Foundation, 1921 E. Carnegie Ave., #3-L, Santa Ana, CA 92705, 949-250-8070, oepf@oep.org, www.oepf.org can send the names and addresses of developmental optometrists in your area.

About the Author

Dr. Harold Wiener

Dr. Wiener received his Doctor of Optometry (OD) in 1950 from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO) where he became an Adjunct Professor lecturing on Behavioral and Developmental Vision and later, Director Emeritus of its Board of Directors. (PCO is now part of Salus University.)

He served on staff at the Gesell Institute of Child Development, New Haven, CT between 1957 and 1959.

After he earned his Doctor of Optometry degree, Dr. Wiener continued his education at Jersey City State College where he received his Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1968. He went on to earn three certifications in Special Education and another in Elementary Education.

He has been a Clinical Associate of the Optometric Extension Program since 1950. He wrote three books for OEP: Vision in the Classroom, 1970, Communicating With The Visual Training Patient, 1975 and Communicating for Success in 1981. He has been a Fellow of the College of Optometrists in Vision Development since 1980.

He is a national and international lecturer on behavioral and developmental vision.

AWARDS

Dr. G.N. Getman Award in Vision Development, College of Optometrists in Vision Development - 1987

Scientific Achievement Award, New Jersey Optometric Association - 1987

President's Gold Medal of Honor, Pennsylvania College of Optometry - 1994

E.C. Nurock Award - Highest Symbol of Recognition, New Jersey Optometric Association - 1995

Albert Fitch Memorial Alumnus of the Year - Pennsylvania College of Optometry - 2004

Dr. Wiener has been in private practice since 1950.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the many men and women of the Optometric Extension Program who have spent their lives helping humanity. Following are some optometrists who had a profound influence on my life and understanding:

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