

What Can The Eyes Do To Help Us

Every now and again you read about a skill or a piece of knowledge that has a nuclear impact on you. Michael Owen learnt how to score with his left foot. Michael Eavis learnt how to rent out a piece of land near Glastonbury to entertain 200,000 people, Neil Armstrong learnt how to step on the moon and every year thousands of people learn how to ski. For each of these people, their lives have changed as a result. In this article I'm going to show you something that literally changed my life almost 10 years' ago. The eyes have it.

Plenty of conclusive research shows that when someone is accessing their minds for information, really thinking about it, their eyes will move in a certain direction.

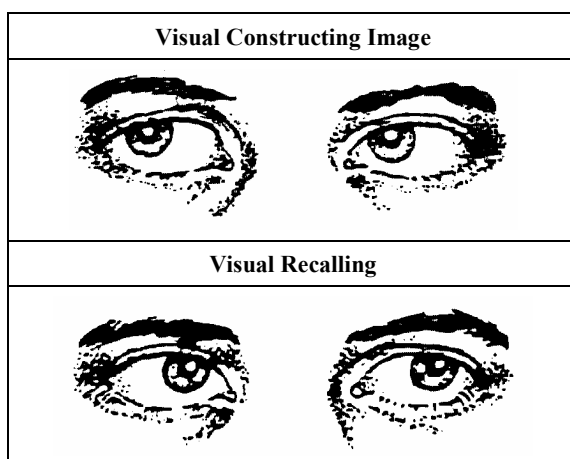
Upwards for pictures, sideways for sounds and words and down right for feelings. It's important to realise that the thinking has to be fairly deep. A generalisation from the person will not reveal any eye movement, as the answer was pretty much instantaneous. In these situations you get that look straight at you.

For example, ask someone what football team they support and they might reply Manchester United or Liverpool without thinking. The eyes won't move. Ask someone to name an animal only found in North America. They'll probably have to think about this and they'll be accessing the inner reaches of their mind for an answer. Their eyes should move indicating whether they are creating a picture, thinking of sounds or revealing feelings.

Let's have a look at each set of eye movements.

Visual Eye Movements

When people are thinking of a picture in their heads they will look upwards often with a tilt of the head. If you want to get scientific, if someone looks up to their right they are creating a picture in the head but if someone is recalling a picture from their memory they'll look up to their left. Tricky to remember which is which sometimes, so just look for an upwards glance. Let's summarise with a picture. You are looking at this person:



THE EYES HAVE IT

I tried this on my daughter, who's not quite 4 yet, a few minutes ago with my digital camera. I asked her "Bethan what do you remember from playgroup this morning?" Instantly her eyes and her head went upwards to her left and I took this snap.



I know that my daughter is very visual, many children are. This helps me to explain things to her in visual language. When I make up stories I try to capture her full attention by describing things in vivid detail. She likes to see colour, movement and imagination and this keeps her attention.

4 year olds can also be like our clients. The next time you see your client's eyes moving upwards, you need to describe things more explicitly. Let their imagination run riot with the detailed paintings your words create for them. They thank you for them and mention to a friend later that you saw eye to eye with each other. Use diagrams and visual aids to engage them and use descriptive language such as "see, look, imagine, let me show you, can I help you see the benefits..."

You can also listen out for the language your client uses. This will help to confirm your visual identification. If you see what I'm saying here or imagine that your head is full of pictures, movement and colour, the only way you can communicate this is through words. The words you use describe what you see. Do you follow my drift? Do you see what I'm saying?

The trick is to learn to turn your language into more visual. This may be natural for you or quite difficult but with a little practise you can do it. When I first started practising this I had a lot of trouble recalling visual words and methods because I'm not a natural visual. I created a visual aid containing key visual words which I would casually refer to when speaking with clients. All these things help

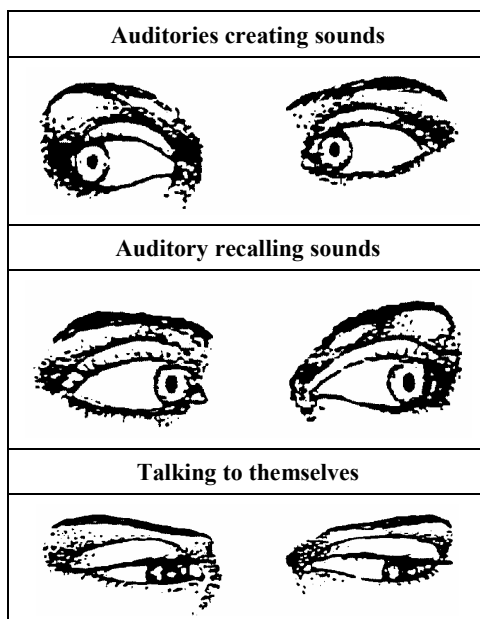
Auditory Eye Movement

Now this is more me. My head is so full of words, sounds, conversation all the time. Sounds scary but I know I'm not alone. My life revolves around narration from myself and from other people's words. I love music which can lift me or push me down. I can change the tone of my voice with little effort and can appreciate the slight change in other's voices. I can hear for a change of mood in the room and I like to listen to people talking and value those who care for every word they speak. I listen out for pauses in people's conversation and can pick up verbal ticks in others with ease. You know those *uhs* and *uhms* people utter when they're thinking.

I'm not special in any sense of the word and certainly not gifted. I'm just normal but my world revolves around sounds and conversations in my head. It's the way I think and make sense of my world. If you didn't know me, a couple of searching questions would quickly reveal my thinking because my eyes will move side to side when I'm hearing what's going on inside my head. Of course my mind is not devoid of pictures but I find it difficult and uncomfortable to have too many.

Auditory preferred people will look sideways and down. To their right for creating sounds or conversations, to their left for recalling a sound and down left when they start talking to themselves, and you can spot me doing this regularly, isn't that the way eh Paul?

Here's the picture

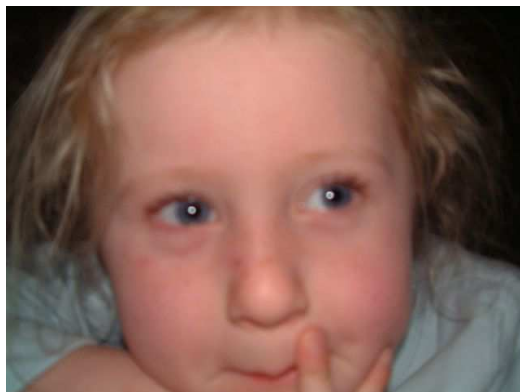


I thought I'd try this again with my daughter who is still cooperating even though it is tea time and she's been such a busy girl today. I thought I'd force her into thinking of a sound with a crafty question. I said "can you sing to yourself your favourite nursery rhyme?"

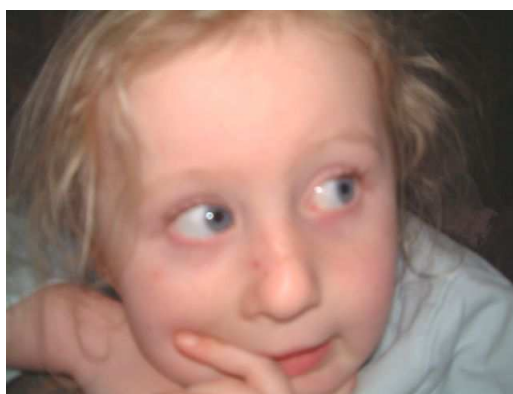
THE EYES HAVE IT

She started with that glazed look you get when people start the thinking process. The look that almost drills through you as they begin to search inside their mind. You can even see Bethan with her finger to her mouth – a classic body language thinking signal.

She looked like this:



When she began to run it through her mind, she moved her head sideways to her left to recall. Incredible



If you spot someone's eyes moving sideways or down to their left, they are hearing sounds, conversations, rhythm in their heads and they don't want you to start communicating to them in an opposite fashion. It's like picking up the phone to someone who speaks so slowly and you normally enjoy a fast paced speaking voice. You'll soon lose interest. It's like putting marmite in your rice pudding – it just doesn't go. You put Jam in your rice pudding don't you Paul. Of course you do Paul...

Converse with them. Look at them when you talk, slow your pace down a little since you'll notice that they'll be speaking slightly slowly since every word is carefully crafted before it leaves their mouth. Listen for their words and repeat some of them. Use their language. Use the language of an auditory. Say, speak, tell, listen, music, sound. I hear what you're saying Bob. Tell me more Mary? Let's listen to that last sentence you gave me – I've read so much into that. Can we say it again? Ask yourself Tim, what is it you really want to do when you retire?

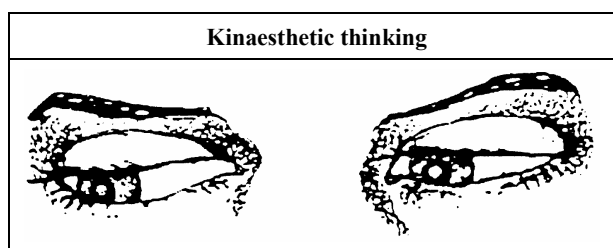
THE EYES HAVE IT

Chuck out the visual aids, the graphs, the pie charts, the glossy pictures. Give them time to speak with themselves on the issues that are important to them. When I speak to myself I look for logic and reasoning. I want to know it all makes sense literally and the argument stacks up. Ask them for their opinions. Respect the auditory world they're in and you'll be rewarded with "I like that guy, he really spoke my language"

They may be clichés or over used phrases but they do have meaning. Generally they're the auditory expressing themselves with words that come from their heads not out of thin air. Match them and you'll enjoy impeccable communication.

Kinaesthetic Eye Movement

Onto our kinaesthetic people or feelings based people. These people will have eye movements generally down to their right. They are accessing a notion, a feeling, a gut reaction...something to make them feel right or wrong or good or bad about something that's on their mind. Down right is the direction of their eyes. Seen visually as this:



It's where we get the phrase "I'm down right mad with you"

Let them look down right. Don't feel they're looking away from you or not engaging in what you're saying to them. They are and in their way. I remember a charming lady from a training course I ran in the depths of Oxfordshire a number of years ago. Now I like to have a great big box of puzzles and games ready on long training courses to spice up the proceedings but I'm generally careful who I give these to. When I greet people in the morning I always ask a few searching questions and observe their eye movements. Such as "How was your morning routine different this morning" or "how did your journey differ to normal?" Something that gets people to have a bit of a think for the answer. I then keep an eye on the visuals, the auditories and the kinos to match them up for team activities later on. Nope this lady was big time kino. Down right went her eyes straight away and her conversation was full of touch, move, It's been weighing on my mind, I'm very concerned about that, I'm not really sure, let me think.

So I placed near her my most complicated puzzles and she took the bait. Throughout the morning she was fiddling and examining these puzzles as though she wasn't paying much attention. But she was still getting the top marks in the quizzes and tests we were running. She came up to me at the end and thanked me for the activities and said she'd gained so much from the training.

Physically touching and playing helped her concentration no end. As a strong kino she was communicating by how she felt and this helped her to concentrate more during the sessions.

THE EYES HAVE IT

Now I'm not that really special or gifted to deserve those comments. I'm not one of those naturally gifted people that are good at everything – you know the types. I just have to work hard for my results and that's what I did here. All I'm doing is applying something to make my job easier and more fruitful. I get a real good feeling inside when I use something I've learnt in my profession to get better results.

This is all I'm asking you to do. Take this information and apply it to your world and see what benefits it gives you. Ask the odd question or two so you can get their eyes moving around. Find a strategy to remember their preferred communication style and then match them. Learn to change your natural communication style and adapt to your clients. That way you'll gain a deeper and richer rapport with everyone you meet.

Oh, by the way, I asked Bethan if she wanted more photographs taken and she replied that she had been such a busy girl and it was tea time so sorry no more photos!

Paul Archer
16th March 2005