

The Bioptic Experience: A Fused Perception

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Whether a person was born with a visual impairment or developed vision loss later in life, not seeing well in our very 'visually oriented world' can impact one's life in many ways.

For seniors, who likely knew normal vision most of their lives, reading small print may be the first challenge they notice and they expect that stronger reading glasses will do the trick. Sometimes though, as a result of disorders such as macular degeneration, diabetes or glaucoma, vision issues become more complicated, and usually conventional eyeglasses, contact lenses, medication or surgery don't offer effective solutions.

For children who were born with a visual impairment from disorders such as albinism, nystagmus, achromatopsia, or developmental issues, 'seeing' was never 'normal' to begin with. Young adults may have had normal vision in their early years and then may develop changes in their vision from Stargardt's Disease.

It is reasonable to assume that the major challenge that individuals with reduced vision have relates to reading. With our wonderful new technologies, there are many excellent ways to magnify print to make it easier to see.

However, not only do we use our vision to read and see things, our distance vision is an important social sense. We use it to make eye contact, read body language and feel connected to the world around us. There is a growing body of research that shows that loss of distance vision can create feelings of isolation and can lead to depression. Other studies show that the lack of visual engagement in social settings and in visually-guided activities can even contribute to cognitive decline.

