

# Pelmanism

## Lesson 5

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I've made some changes to bring this series of documents up to date. I'm sharing it with you because it helped me bring together a lifetime of experience dealing with the assorted problems in creating order out of chaos.

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# PELMANISM

## Concentration

### Lesson No. 5

## The Pelman System of Mind and Memory Training

### FOREWORD

**Editor's Note: This is basically the original course but I've made some minor changes in an attempt to bring it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century but essentially kept the same language.**

To the Student:

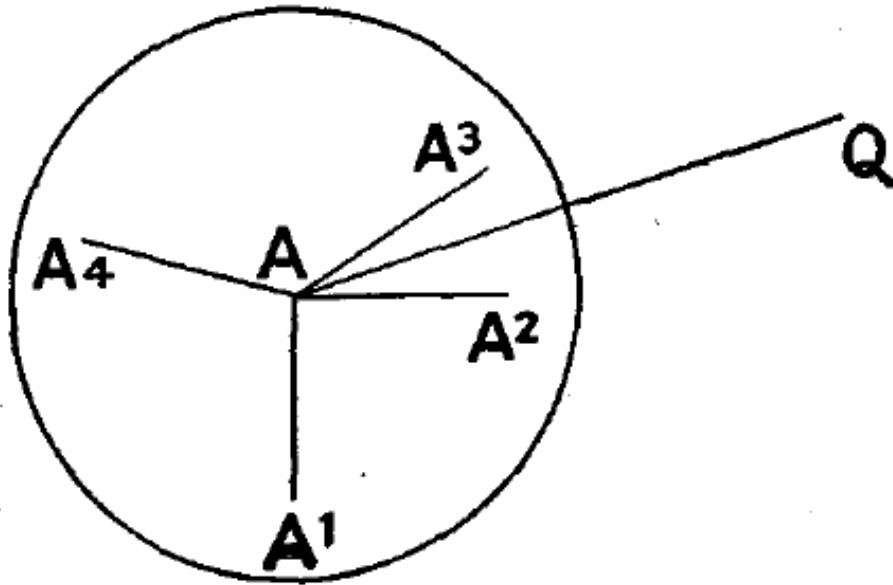
Once more the object before us is Power. This time it is the power to focus attention. Get the ability to control the operations of your mind. Put an end to mind-wandering. Be master of the thought process; not its slave. It is easy when you know how, and this lesson gives you the secret. Study it closely. Practice all the exercises. You will soon begin to feel an increase in mental grip. The sense of being superficial will leave you, because attention gives you sound knowledge, and sound knowledge means memory and new ideas.

### I. MOVEMENT vs. FIXATION

1. It is erroneous to imagine that concentration means fixation; it means a controlled movement: No doubt that sounds like a contradiction in terms but let us explain. You sit down to solve a problem, any kind of problem. Difficult ones are plentiful, but we shall take a practical one because it serves our present purpose: it is the desirability, or otherwise, of building a garage somewhere on the lot. The idea in its persistent form came to you in the train; you saw a new garage being built, and it fused together all the vague wishes of the past; you felt you must have a garage of your own. So you find a quiet spot, light your pipe, and begin to think the matter out. First, you have to decide whether you can afford the outlay. There is a little figure work on the back of an envelope and you emerge from your calculations triumphant. Next, there is the cost of upkeep; heat for the winter, repairs, painting, and so forth. A little more figure work, and you reach another favorable decision. Then there comes the cost of a bench and an outfit of tools, and accessories. When these and similar items are satisfactorily settled, you find you can decide the issue in the affirmative, and you resolve to place an order forthwith.

### **The Circle of Related Ideas**

2. Now what has happened in your mind during this little bit of concentrated effort? We shall say nothing about the ideas, hopes, desires, or doubts which momentarily came into consciousness before you finally solved the problem; they are not unimportant, but they are not our chief concern here. We are dealing with your determination to fix your attention on the garage question until you had solved it one way or the other; and if you are candid, you will admit on reflection that you did not focus your attention like an astronomer on a star. You moved your attention from one aspect of the subject to another, then back again to the starting point, then to a new aspect altogether; until you proved that concentration was not fixation but controlled movement. Let us see if we can make a diagram of it:



### **Concentration and Change**

3. In this figure the circle stands for the area in which the mind moves freely among the intimate relationships of the problem. A, the centre of the circle, is the problem itself: A garage. To be or not to be? It is manifest you cannot solve anything by fixing your attention on the problem itself. If you make the attempt you simply become unpleasantly and increasingly aware of the fact that there is a problem. Every problem is made up of parts, and each part in turn must receive attention. So you may wisely move from A to A1, which deals with the cost of building. This means that for the time being you

forget the garage altogether in order to discover how much money you can spare.

4. When this point is settled, you return immediately to A and almost instantaneously find yourself at A2, which means the cost of upkeep. You remember that Rhodes, your friend at Yonkers, gave you a statement of his annual expenses in this matter, but you believe you can get a cheaper form of heating, and your mind travels to a place in the city where you looked at a stove which seemed to be just the thing. Returning to the thought of cost you add up the various, items together and conclude you can meet the bill. Back again at A you are switched off to A3 then to A4; we have not specified them all, but those we have examined are sufficient for our purpose.

### **Attention vs. Mind-Wandering**

5. We desired to show that concentration on a problem does not mean a hypnotic gaze at it, but a free movement among all the items of which it is composed. A man with good powers of attention can go from point to point and return to the original centre; a man with poor abilities goes from A to A1 like a flash, pausing for a moment, then with lightning speed lie is back again to A, to find himself jerked to Q,

which is outside the radius, and may mean golf, his income-tax statement, a love affair, or anything at all. He is thus guilty of mind-wandering. There is a lack of mental control; he is the slave of association, when he should be its master. One thing leads to another, and he follows the leading like a lamb. We shall later on show by what means he may become the master instead of the slave.

### **What Psychologists Say**

6. You have, perhaps, been taught to believe that concentration means fixing the attention on something, and there may be some difficulty in getting rid of the idea. Very well, let us ask two questions;

(a) what is orthodox teaching on the subject? and

(b) is it really possible to fix the attention exclusively on any one thing? The first question is easily answered, for all authorities are practically unanimous in saying that attention, or concentration, cannot be fixed on anything; there must be a change in the subject or object, in the mind itself, or the thing looked at.

7. The object changes when you fix your attention on the screen in a picture theatre. The subject changes when your mind travels over the

various aspects of the thing looked at. Let that thing be a book lying on the table. The book itself does not change, but your mind changes as you gaze at it. Just try the experiment. You will discover that although you concentrate on the book, as such, your attention is caught, first, by its binding, then its gilt top, then its title, and these points, even momentarily considered, divert you from the book itself to bindings, titles, and subjects.

### **Self-Hypnotism**

8. This also answers the second question. If you did succeed in fixing your attention on one object, it would not be concentration but self-hypnotism, just as when you fix the eye on a bright disc you “go off” eventually. Even were you to close your eyes and focus attention on a single thought, you would reduce the area of consciousness and develop what is known as a “dreamy mental state” of which the ecstasy of the mystic is a good instance. Ecstasy, whatever else it is, can be no more than a species of self-hypnotism. The kind of concentration we are dealing with in this lesson has nothing mystic about it. It involves the synthetic working of the whole mind, directed to one end, but controlled by the will in all its movements.

### **Self-Control**

9. The practical effect of this teaching ought to be highly encouraging, for we have met with hundreds of cases in which men and women have wrongly accused themselves of lack of concentration. They had been trying to fix the attention on one thing, and because they had failed they became exceedingly depressed. What they lacked was control. They could not order their thoughts and keep them revolving round a central issue. Attention wandered off into numerous by-paths. Here are two specimen letters from this type of mind-wanderer:

“When I read a book I grasp the first sentence, which tells me that the late Sir Alfred Jones was keenly interested in the growing of bananas in Jamaica. I go on to the next sentence, but before I have finished it I have lost the little bit of meaning it conveyed; for the name Jamaica brings to mind the earthquake which caused immense damage and suffering there. All the time my eye is taking in the print of sentence after sentence, and my mind is a medley of earthquakes, bananas, shipping and submarines. At last I have to turn back and read the whole page again, much to my disgust. The only kind of book I can read without mind-wandering is a novel with a deep plot in it.”

Here is another letter:

“What does a fellow have to do who cannot settle down to anything for more than five minutes at a time? That's my complaint. I resolve to work at my math's, and get my books and papers together, but as soon as I open them my mind goes off to something else, and I begin to draw figures or to write a story. If you can dose me with anything that will lift me out of this chaos I'll take it and thank you.”

10. Examine these two cases. They are both alike in lack of control: the first man has a mind which is at the complete mercy of association; the second man is a prey to the mood and fancy of the moment. The first makes some semblance of effort to guide the stream of consciousness; the second ships his oars and lets the stream take him where it will.

## **II. CAUSES OF MIND WANDERING**

11. What are the causes of these conditions? They may be classified as follows:

Physical causes, due to nervous illness of various kinds; the effects of shock or accident; excitable temperament; restlessness.

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Mental. causes, due to a profusion of interests; a mind that works very rapidly; natural indolence ; lack of interest; the habit of drifting.

Economic causes, due to a monotony of daily work; highly specialized duties narrowing the mental sphere.

### **Some Causes Analyzed**

12. This is not a complete list, but it embodies the majority of causes. Take one from each section and study it. There is the love of excitement for instance, which is a frequent obstacle to concentration. There seems to be a tendency to throw off self-restraint and to give way to impulse, which is probably due to the ever increasing pressure of modern life.

This propensity is fostered in the schools of today, where each lesson is much shorter in duration than was the case a. century ago, while every effort is made to render the subject of instruction as pleasant as possible to the student. Although there are undoubtedly arguments in favor of this practice, it is clear that it must operate prejudicially to concentration, for the youthful mind is not trained, as it formerly was, to devote its continued attention to matters not inherently pleasing to

it. As a natural result, the emotions of pleasure or of dislike are constantly being emphasized.

Huxley has said that “perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do when it has to be done, whether you like it or not. It is the first lesson which ought to be learned, and however early a man's training begins it is probably the last he learns thoroughly.”

### **Too Many “Interests”**

13. Then there is the mind-wandering brought about by a profusion of interests. It is a case of too many irons in the fire. We have enrolled students who glory in this fact. They joyfully assert that they are interested in business, in art, in church work, in old china, in tennis, in chess, and many other things, but they usually conclude their letter by saying; “Somehow or other it seems impossible to focus the mind on anything.” No wonder.

Attention has got into the habit of distributing itself over a very wide area; the program is a continual hop, skip, and jump from one thing to another. Our capacity for versatility is not unlimited. We can attend to only a few subjects if we are to do well in them, and if attention to the

many makes attention impossible to the few, a radical change in method is necessary. Narrow your range, and increase the power of your focus.

### **Monotony of Work**

14. Among economic causes of mind-wandering none is more potent than monotony of daily work that can be done almost without thinking about it. The mind has a tendency to wander off at its own sweet will, but it is not so free as to be able to forget entirely the task before it. Momentarily it is called back to adjust an error, to tighten a screw, or to notch a gauge, but it is soon off again, and a year or two of that kind of mental life, with no effort to correct the habit in leisure hours, makes concentration exercises rather difficult at first. Unless a student has already trained his power, he is disposed to sidetrack these exercises, or to avoid them. That is folly. Having commenced this course seriously, and carried it through up to now in that spirit, continue to the end. Aim at mastery for the sake of self-respect, and because mastery is a worthy ideal as well as a real advantage.

### **Trace Your Own Cause**

15. It is of some importance to know what is the cause of your mind-wandering, if you suffer from it. Should it be traced to a nervous breakdown, you cannot afford to put too much pressure on yourself at first; you must go slowly and be content with steady progress. Should it be traceable to indolence, or to a wrong method of schooling, you can then follow a more Spartan regime; in fact it is your duty to do so. Instead of concentrating for ten minutes and then having a rest or a change to something else, gradually extending the time by five minutes to thirty minutes in each hour, time yourself for thirty minutes at once, and resolve to see the thing through, however often you fail during first attempts.

### **“Quick” Intellects**

16. The rapid-working mind is one that is met with occasionally, and usually belongs to people, who, when young, could quickly learn their lessons, and probably forget them just as quickly. Their minds, even now, move with a speed that is abnormal. They never “continue in one stay,” and can seldom concentrate in the ordinary way. They try to make up for the defect by very close attention for brief period, like a

search-light, focussed here and there, and yet always “on the move.” Some people seem to do very Well by this method, and Prof. James, speaking of such men and women, says

“Some of the most efficient workers I know are of the ultra-scatter-brained type. One friend who does a prodigious quantity of work, has in fact confessed to me that, if he wants to get ideas on any subject, he sits down to work at something else, his best results coming through his mind-wanderings. This is perhaps an epigrammatic exaggeration on his part; but I think seriously that no one of us need be too much distressed at his own shortcomings in this regard. Our mind may enjoy but little comfort, may be restless and feel confused, but it may be extremely efficient all the time.”

We are bound to admit the type is not very plentiful, and no student should plume himself on belonging to this unusual group.

### **Does Genius “Mind-Wander?”**

17. But the type does exist, although specimens are few and far between. The late Prof. Henri Poincaré, famous as physicist and mathematician, is said to have been one. His mental methods were closely analyzed by an expert, and the verdict was that the famous

mathematician's power of abstraction could only be described as flighty, unstable and uncontrolled. Just the qualities which would have made a writer of novels; instead of the writer of profound books on science and mathematics.

18. On the other hand, Poincaré himself, in his *Science and Method*, says that he often worked a whole night at a problem, which means many hours of really close concentration, and which is far removed from the spasmodic, the uncontrolled, and the unstable. What Poincaré did believe in most strongly was the duty of concentration for a period, then a change to other work or to recreation, the idea being that an unsolved problem would be solved in the subconscious sphere during the interval, and would, later on, announce the solution to the conscious mind. Still, men of genius are not models for the majority of people, especially when testimony as to their methods is conflicting. In most of us close attention is the only way to the achievements that are possible.

### **About Intuitions**

19. There is also another type which is much more common, consisting of men who never seem to ponder their problems. They find a solution

at once, and apparently follow the first notion that comes. It is as if they acted intuitively, without concentrating on the matter and reasoning it out.

How is it done? The answer is twofold: First, such decisions usually concern a man's business or profession, or something with which long experience has made him familiar. Second; these decisions are fine; examples of psycho-synthesis where mental functions, like analysis, memory and imagination, do not work in semi-separation, but unitedly as a whole. It is the ideal method, but is attainable only by giving each function its appropriate training on the lines of these lessons,

### **III. THE ADVANTAGES OF CONCENTRATION**

20. It may seem hardly necessary to enlarge further on the importance of the power of concentration, but we propose to do so in order that the reader may grasp the salient facts more firmly.

21. The first and most obvious advantage of controlled attention is that the whole of the mental functions are hereby developed to the limit of their capacity. The act of close attention means that whilst you examine one object, or one idea, you are unconsciously exercising

your memory, recalling similar objects or ideas. You are using your imagination in conceiving improvement by change. You are all the time comparing and contrasting, testing theories and accepting or rejecting them.

22. Concentrate on a new pattern in golf clubs, for example, or on anything about which you have some knowledge already, and you will find all these mental processes at work, as a reconstruction of your thinking will show. There is no merit in concentration itself; its value lies in the opportunity it gives to the functioning of our mental powers as a whole. There is no illumination in it per se, but even a searchlight cannot throw its beams into the sky without the help of the mechanism which makes light, and focus possible, and that is what concentration does for the mind.

### **It Brings Accurate Knowledge**

23. The second advantage of controlled attention is that it brings accurate knowledge. One can see many things without really seeing them. We sense them, but do not know them; or we think so superficially about an idea that it is always vague. Until we give real attention to phenomena we cannot truly know them; even though the

phenomena be no more than the pen with which we write, or the blue black ink that flows from it.

### **Observant Attention**

24. Halleck tells us that a man once said to the pupils of a large school, all of whom had often seen cows: "I should like to find out how many of you know whether a cow's ears are above, below, behind, or in front of her horns. I want only those pupils to raise their hand who are sure about the position and who will promise to give a dollar to charity if the answer is wrong." Only two hands were raised. Their owners had drawn cows, and in order to do that had been forced to concentrate their attention upon the animals. Fifteen pupils were sure that they had seen cats climb trees and descend them. There was unanimity of opinion that the cats went up head first. When asked whether the cats came down head or tail first, the majority were sure that the cats had descended as they were never known to do. Anyone who had ever noticed the shape of the claws of any beast of prey could have answered that question without seeing an actual descent.

"Farmers' boys, who have often seen cows and horses lie down and rise, are seldom sure whether the animals rise with their fore or hind

legs first, or whether the habit of the horse agrees with that of the cow in this respect. The elm tree has about its leaf a peculiarity which all ought to notice the first time they see it, yet only about five per cent. of a certain school could incorporate this peculiarity in a drawing, although it is so easily outlined on paper. Perception, to achieve satisfactory results, must summon the will to its aid to concentrate attention. Only the smallest part of what falls upon our senses at any time is actually perceived.”

### **Lawyers' Agreements**

25. The reading of a lawyer’s agreement is too often done perfunctorily; sometimes in a spirit of trustfulness, sometimes because a hurried hour is unfortunately selected for the purpose, and sometimes because time is short and signatures are awaited. But later, when trouble begins and the agreement is taken out of the safe, the want of a little concentrated attention is painfully evident. The memory was misinformed because it never received a true knowledge of the most important clause.

### **The Mind of the Expert**

26. All the way through life, this want of attention exacts its penalties. We may not be conscious of them every time we suffer, but it is something of a refinement in tragedy to suffer and yet not to know it. Many of us began life with a lack of training in attention, and we have industriously followed a false start. Over against this ineffective type of mind is that of the expert.

27. An expert is one who has become a master in discrimination; he can diagnose new circumstances because he is proficient in his knowledge of similarities and differences in connection with his subject; and his mastery is the direct outcome of his concentration. If he is skilled in woodcraft he knows the trees by their outlines, even in winter. If he is a keen musician he can point out the failures and successes of two or more renderings of a pianoforte sonata, most of which would have escaped the untrained ear. If he is a man of science he can value a new hypothesis in a convincing manner, because his past training has taught him the significance of minutiae as well as imparted the ability to detect the difference between the seeming and the real.

### **Aim at Mastery**

28. It is cheering to know that most of us can be experts in something and that the secret of it lies in developing the simple habit of close attention. To have one sphere of knowledge, however humble, in which we are masters, is to engender a kind of intellectual self-respect; not egotism or vanity, not foolish pride or unpleasant self-assertion, but a feeling that in some way we have justified the existence of our intelligence by causing it to serve an ideal. Keep this ideal of mastery before you and you will find that the habit of concentration is easily formed.

### **Increases Memory Power**

29. The third advantage of controlled attention is that of increased memory power. We forget a good deal because we never really knew what we desire to recall. The first impression of the fact, the idea, or the person, was sketchy; neither definite nor vivid; we did not aim at mastery or accuracy. It may be taken as a good general rule that attention means memory. You cannot recall what you have never known. If the original experience is vague, the result of the attempt to recall it will be vague also.

Here again we meet with the ethical element in mental training; you reap that which you have sown. If you sow carelessness you cannot expect to reap accuracy. If you sow inattention you must not look for a rich harvest of recollections. If you sow indifference to life, you cannot hope to reap the fruits of a fine sensibility.

30. To get the best of what the world offers, its outward benefits as well as its inward experiences, one has to put some conscience into living; and this is nowhere more manifest, in its intellectual associations, than in the way in which the valued stores of memory are dependent on the conscientious discharge of the duty of attention. Your memory power is largely in your own hands. You can make it what you will. Let your mind wander and you get a mass of vague and unorganized data; concentrate, and the mass is changed into a classified and easily recollected whole.

### **Concentration and Originality**

31. The fourth advantage of controlled attention is the aid which it gives to discovery and originality. New ideas often come unexpectedly and unbidden from which it is too often inferred that they are pure inspirations, and therefore completely beyond our control. This is not

so. No man gets brilliantly original ideas about that of which he has thought little, and of which he knows nothing at all. If Marshal Foch received an inspiration on the battlefield, an idea which ultimately opened up a new aspect of warfare, it was because he was thoroughly versed in strategy and tactics. The garbage man is often a valued member of the community, but we do not expect him to show originality in painting, or political economy. We 'do expect him, however, to have an open mind for new ideas on cans with dog-defying lids. Indeed he is more likely to have ideas on that subject than anybody else, unless it be the manufacturers.

### **The Mark of Great Minds**

32. It is a commonplace in psychology that one of the chief differences between a mind of great caliber and one of less is this power of concentrated attention. Those names which are associated with distinctively original conceptions, like that of Sir Isaac Newton, have been remarkable for the ability to forget, for hours together, the immediate things of time and space, and to devote the whole mind to some problem calling for solution.

33. Sir William Hamilton has it that “the difference between an ordinary mind and the mind of Newton consists principally in this, that one is capable of the application of a more continuous attention than the other; that a Newton is able, without fatigue, to connect inference with inference in one long series towards a determined end; while the man of inferior capability is soon obliged to break or let fall the thread which he had begun to spin. . . . To one who complimented him on his genius Newton replied, that if he had made any discoveries, it was owing more to patient attention than to any other talent.” (*Lectures on Metaphysics*, Vol. I, p. 256.)

### **The Required Preparatory Work**

34. This does not mean that any man by concentrating long enough could have made the same discoveries, or that by merely focusing on his own affairs an engineer will suddenly see, as in a vision, the outline of an entirely new machine. There is a preparatory condition. In Newton's case it was a sense of profound wonder in the presence of Nature; a deep knowledge of physical force; and a consuming desire to discover the secrets of the heavens.

35. In the case of James Watt it was a close familiarity with mathematical instruments and with waterworks engineering which formed the basis of his discoveries in steam-power. They supplied the raw material for the new meditation which the presence of Newton's water-lifting engine stimulated within him. Both Newton and Watt possessed that absorbing interest-power which is really the primary agent in producing new ideas.

What concentration does is to give this creative agent its full opportunity. That opportunity may not be fruitful during the period of concentration, or indeed during several periods; for experience shows that the new idea will often come suddenly and unexpectedly, perhaps when the mind is occupied with an altogether different matter. But it is also true that those new ideas seldom come unless a certain amount of close attention has preceded them. Are we not told that Creation followed the brooding over chaos?

#### **IV. THE MORALS OF CONCENTRATION**

36. It has been said that the mind of man is a great arena of conflict in which thoughts struggle together for supremacy and where the fittest alone survive. There is more than a mere figure of speech in this view.

Not only do the more interesting and the most forceful ideas survive to become the glory and the sadness of memory, but certain ideas persist in spite of ourselves and against our best interests; at least for a time. There are people whose minds are plagued with undesirable thoughts, and, usually, this condition is dealt with by the moralist. But it is just as much a question for the psychologist.

### **Power to Inhibit Ideas**

37. The function of the psychologist is to show us how to displace the less desirable thoughts by concentrating on the more desirable; and so soon as mental control is thus established, the plague of unpleasant ideas is at an end. We have overcome evil with good; we are so deeply interested in the right thing, or the thing that is useful, that the other never gets a chance. "We are not responsible for the thoughts that enter our minds. No man ever was," says Dr. Hanna in his well known book on *Brain and Personality*, "but," he adds, "what we are responsible for is the thoughts that we allow to stay there." Yet there is a sense in which we are responsible for all our thoughts, in spite of anything that may be said to the contrary. Every forbidden thought, which assails us without conscious origin, comes from the

subconscious sphere. How did it get there in its primary form if not through the conscious?

38. Still, this is a matter outside our purview, and we mention it here partly because of its interest, and partly because so many people used to imagine that evil thinking was caused by devils whispering in the ear; in fact some folks seem to believe in the whispering theory even now.

### **V. HOW TO DEVELOP CONCENTRATION**

39. Turn back to Lesson II. We showed you there the great importance of Interest, and we anticipated the general course of our present remarks. Active attention springs from interest, as a rule; that is, the emotional element is the compelling power. But there is also an interest which is the offspring of attention. There are many middle aged men who have acquired a liking for golf; at first they had no interest in the game, and simply went round the links in order to fulfill a promise to the doctor. But slowly interest began to grow, and with it came attention and effort. Later, this middle aged person who grumblingly, and often angrily, walked after the little white ball, is keen on winning a prize. Although in the first place attention created

interest, it is now interest which sustains attention; and it may be written down as a law that the more interest you have, the greater will be your power of concentration.

### **General Conditions of Success**

40. Apart from interest, however, there are certain conditions on which concentration depends for its success. The chief are:

- (a) The right physical and mental states.
- (b) The practice of exercises on approved lines.
- (c) The transformation of effort into habit. This habit is the ultimate aim of all training. Concentration should be so easy that there is no great sense of effort in applying oneself to any object or idea which calls for attention.

### **Physical Conditions**

41. These, briefly, include a body and a brain in a state that is without pain or fatigue; a bodily position that is free from discomfort, and an atmosphere that is hygienic. There must be no distraction arising from continuous and irritating noises. It may be said that few people can

command such conditions. That is a wrong view. The majority of men and women can either get the right conditions, or overcome the effect of unfavorable conditions; the ability to concentrate almost anywhere is one that can be developed. Journalists, especially, often become proficient in this respect. Livingstone tells us that he did all his studying amid the roar of a factory.

### **The Most Useful Exercise**

42. We are sometimes asked this question: What is the best form of physical exercise to follow in order that close mental attention shall be easy? An American professor tested over two hundred High School pupils on this point, and his tabulated results show that “walking” received the highest number of votes, a fact which may be taken as an adverse criticism of the policy of violent exercise.

### **Mental Conditions**

43. If the physical conditions are right, those that are mental are bound to have a good start, but their continuance is not assured. A bit of bad news may break in upon our otherwise satisfactory effort, and the whole mind becomes incapable of prolonged attention. There are other factors also at work, and to some of the more important we shall

now direct your attention. There is the mistake of trying to force concentration upon a mind already tired. You may possibly lead a tired mind, by interest into a state of close attention, but it is not wise to do so if the time for rest has arrived. Exhaustion of energy should be followed by a period of repair.

### **Concentration and Digestion**

44. Then there is the effort to concentrate immediately after a substantial meal. This is a time which should be given up to reading, or the collection of facts, or mental work that is more or less mechanical. Open air exercise of a non-strenuous nature, or some kind of social recreation, is often the best way of taking rest and of adjusting bodily conditions to mental needs.

As already explained, the underlying intention of every exercise and of all formal discipline is to develop ease of working and to do almost unconsciously what before required much conscious effort. A beginner with the violin uses finger exercises to give him mastery over that part of the technique. At first he "feels" for his notes; afterwards he finds them automatically, subconsciously. It is the same with mental exercises. We practice in order that concentration shall not be a

conscious and formal effort, but a habit following the leadership of interest or of will.

### **Ease and Economy**

45. The ideal is so to obtain the control of thought-is as to be able to turn attention in any direction we desire, and in this way we accomplish a true economy of action. If when engaged in conversation you had to think of the grammar of every expression you used, you would find, half an hour's talk ending in exhaustion. But because you have mastered grammar you obey its rules unconsciously and can give your whole mind to news or ideas. It is a great gain when mental operations become automatic; the saving of energy is so considerable that every student should try to increase the number of unconscious mental power He should so train his abilities that he perceive, remembers, concentrates, imagines, and resolves in an effortless manner. This is the condition referred to by Prof. Whitehead in his "Introduction to Mathematics". After explaining sonic figures he says: "This example shows that, by the aid of symbolism, we can make transitions in reasoning almost mechanically by the eye, which would otherwise call into play the higher faculties of the brain. It is a truism, repeated by all copybooks and by eminent people when they are

making speeches, that we should cultivate the habit of thinking of what we are doing. The precise opposite is the case. Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them." That is what PELMANJSM does for all its serious students.

46. At first, we are and we must be conscious of what we are doing. In a general sense it must always be so, but there are numerous spheres of action where growth depends on this ability to do unconsciously what we used to do consciously. As Titchener has it, "the more a piece of work is reduced to a matter of course, the more power has the mind to advance to further work." (*Primer of Psychology*, p. 87.)

### **The "Least Effort" in Observation**

47. Take observation. The man who has worked our exercises thoroughly never thinks about the exercises themselves; he sees, and notices, and thinks, all in a moment; and he does these things with much greater efficiency than ever before. He has no need to say, when he rises in the morning, "I must keep my eyes and ears open today." He used to do that once – when he was a learner; but reflective observation became a habit, and now, quite subconsciously, he

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observes men and things with a keenness hitherto unknown. It is the same with his thought forces. Previously he cast about here and there, wondering what it would be best to “take-up;” or else he never wondered at all. Then he got an idea with some soul in it. He nurtured that idea until it became a real power. Today he is hard at work trying to embody it in action; but he seldom expresses it in words, even to himself. Ambition is a habit with him; he moves because he must. Memory has the same story to tell. He toiled with exercises and methods for a season, until the training began to have its due effect. Remembrance, once a mighty effort, is now almost a lightning process, because attention and concentration are ready servants of his Will, yielding a kind of knowledge that is vivid and permanent.

You see now what is meant by economy of effort. Every added ability you get makes a certain class of work easier because there is more scope for the exercise of higher functions.

### EXERCISES

#### Exercise XVI

Take a pencil and a sheet of paper. From the newspaper select some case that offers scope for argument; say it is one where a youth committed suicide (leaving a letter declaring he was sane) and where the coroner returned a verdict of temporary insanity. Your question is: Can a sane man ever commit suicide? Write down your thoughts just as they come; never mind their lack of sequence. Your present aim is to concentrate on one subject for say a quarter of an hour; and if you keep on writing about it you are likely to succeed. You jot down the question: "What is sanity? " Then almost at once you add: "Are there any semi-insane people about? "

Did this young man 's belief in his sanity prove it?" What great men have justified self-destruction? "

If you feel you must answer one of your questions, do so; perhaps you will write for twenty minutes or half an hour without difficulty, and during the whole of that time your attention has not really wandered from the subject. Thus the exercise has justified itself. The accuracy of

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your questions and answers is not unimportant, but it is quite secondary in this connection. What you are aiming at is not literature, journalism, or philosophy, but mind-training. Such an exercise should be practiced until the student feels he can do it easily. There ought to be no difficulty in finding subjects in the daily press, but in their absence one of the following topics might be substituted:

- (a) Humor in Films.
- (b) The pet-dog nuisance.
- (e) What is the matter with education?
- (d) Are dustless roads possible:'
- (e) An aerial Atlantic service.
- (f) Is the "Silly Season" dead?
- (g) Laws that ought to be abolished.
- (h) Flappers.
- (i) Have we seen the last war?

### Exercise XVII

Choose a subject that strikes you as quite unattractive, and concentrate upon it by trying to follow its arguments as set out by the writer whose words you propose to study.

When you have made your choice, concentrate upon it at first for ten minutes, then increase the time by five minutes .until you can do half an hour easily, You had better use the pencil and paper method, as before, asking questions and writing answers. The aim, of course, is not knowledge, but control of mental operations. This is of value, but the value can be over-estimated. Thus we are told that to make an uninteresting subject interesting, by paying attention to it, is better training for the mind than paying attention to an interesting subject. It is good training, but not better. The Spartan, in anything, is a worshipper of discipline for discipline's sake; but it was not the Spartan Greeks who led the world.

Nevertheless, no PELMAN student can afford to neglect anything that is good training, so practice this exercise until you can do it easily.

Such subjects as Bimetallism, the game laws, and currency problems are generally voted unattractive by the majority of people. It may be

an excess of Spartan discipline to follow the late Dr. Martineau, who compelled himself when a young man to devote his best energies to the subjects for which he had no aptitude; but a little discipline of this kind is good for all of us.

### **Exercise XVIII**

Paraphrasing, that is, rewriting a sentence or a paragraph so as to give the same sense in other words, is an excellent exercise in concentration. The method may be illustrated as follows:

Butler in his Hudibras says,

“Money, the' only power

That all mankind fall down before.”

Rewritten it might be rendered thus:

“' The Money King alone receives homage from all men,”

or: “One Power only is Supreme—Money bends every knee.”

Of course, Butler was mistaken in his estimate of all mankind, but that is not the question. We have to paraphrase his meaning and thus

exercise our powers of concentration. Select one or two passages for this purpose. After reading a passage through, and assuring yourself you understand it, try to state its meaning aloud, with as little hesitation as possible. You may not succeed at first, but this method will help you in finding new words. Take sufficient time to complete the work, and, if your mind wanders, make a note of the number of times you transgress in this way.

### **CARD MEMORY**

There are many things that one wishes to remember for only a short time, but which must be remembered with great accuracy. The ability to do this depends on two things; trained observation, and the power of undivided attention for the time being. You must see things exactly as they are and you must not allow yourself to think about anything else. Artificial aids to the memory are not of the slightest use. The memory you have is strong enough for all purposes. All it wants is a little training.

There are many things in which this transient memory is particularly useful, and in which the want of it is keenly felt by those who do not understand the secret of it. An excellent illustration, and one which will

doubtless appeal to a large class of people, is what is called "card memory"; the ability to remember the cards played in a game. One constantly hears the remark; "I have no memory for cards," or; "I never can remember what is out." There should be no difficulty about this. The trouble is that they do not know how to - go about it.

Let us suppose that the game is bridge, or auction, and you wish to improve your "card memory." Do not wait until you are engaged in an actual game, because other things will then distract your attention. This attention, based on interest, is one of the things absolutely essential to Success, but it must be cultivated under favorable circumstances, until such time as it becomes a pleasure, rather than a task. Bridge players learn the conventional bids, the proper leads, and all such things, in private lessons, before they venture to cut into a rubber with strangers. Card memory should be acquired in the same way; but you do not need a teacher; you can train yourself.

Let us see how we can apply the mind to this problem of remembering cards, so that it shall act in accordance with the principles already laid down for the recollection of other things. Remembering cards is no different from any other memory; it all depends on the proper exercise

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of the comparative faculty upon the ability to see difference and agreement, to classify.

Take a pack of cards, shuffle thoroughly, and deal out two hands of thirteen each. Sort one of them into suits, and lay it face up on the table to represent the dummy. Now sort the other thirteen into suits and hold them in your hand as if you were the declarer.

Count up the number of cards in each suit, one suit at a time, in order to see of which suit you have the greatest number. Let us suppose there are two hearts in the dummy and three in your hand. That is five hearts. Four clubs in dummy and two in your hand. That is six clubs. Four diamonds in dummy and three in your hand. That is seven diamonds. Three spades in dummy and five in your hand. That is eight spades.

Now turn all dummy's cards face down in a bunch, and see if you, can recollect how many there were of each suit in the combined hands, looking at your own as a guide. Then turn your own cards face down, and see if you can recall the manner in which' each suit was divided between the two hands.

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Pay more attention to the manner in which the suits are, divided; the number in the dummy and the number you held. Unless you do this, your memory will be often at fault, because there has been no comparison. Practice in this way for a few minutes every day, for at least a week, or until you find yourself expert enough to recall the number of each suit in each hand after looking at them once only.

When you can do this first exercise with ease, shuffle and deal two hands as before; but instead of counting the suits, see what honors you have, and compare them with the honors that are out against you in each suit. Suppose dummy's hearts are ace and small; yours king, ten and small. Observe that the queen and jack are against you in hearts. They are in the hands of your opponents. Again; dummy has the jack of clubs; you have no honor, so that ace, king, queen, ten are against you in clubs; Dummy has nothing in diamonds; you have king, ten; so that ace, queen, jack are against you. Dummy has king, jack of spades; you have ace and little ones; - so that only queen, ten are against you in spades.

Now turn down dummy's cards and see if you can recall the honors it held in the various suits, comparing with your own cards, as a guide.

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Then turn down your own hand also, and see if you can name all the honors in the two hands combined, and how they were divided. Never forget this element of the division; both in the observation of the hands and in your recollection of them, because that is the comparison, and it is the comparison that fixes the attention and snakes the impression that is so easy to recall.

After training the memory with this second exercise for some time, until you feel confident of yourself, occasionally reverting to the first exercise on the division of the suits, you should be ready to try the combination of the two. After one careful comparison of dummy's cards with your own, you should be able to turn down dummy's cards and recall both the number of each suit and the honors in it. You can then try turning down your own cards and recalling the whole hand. Having become fairly proficient in this, try the comparison, and then turn down both hands simultaneously, noting how much of the distribution of suits and honors you can recall.

When you feel that you can do this pretty well, you should be ready to proceed to the next exercise, which consists in analyzing the hand, with a view to its possibilities. Shuffle and deal two hands of thirteen

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cards each, sort them, and place dummy's face up before you, holding the other thirteen in your hand. Suppose the declaration is no trumps. It does not matter whether that is the right declaration or not, because that has nothing to do with training the memory.

Now count up the certain tricks in the combined hands, and then look for the possible tricks.

Let us suppose that dummy has king and two small clubs, and you have ace, and one small. It is manifestly impossible for you to make more than two tricks in that suit, no matter how you manage it.

Dummy has three spades to the queen and you have three to the jack. You cannot be sure of a spade trick by any manner of play; but if the adversaries lead that suit, no matter how or when, you must make either queen or jack. Dummy has four small hearts; you hold ace and one. There is nothing in that suit but one sure trick. Dummy has jack, ten, small in diamonds, while you hold six to the ace, queen. In that suit it is possible to make six tricks if the king is on your right, by leading the high diamonds from the hand that is short in that suit, after getting in with the club king.

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Now turn dummy's cards down and see if you can recollect these possibilities. After you have tried the experiment a number of times, turn down your own cards, as well as dummy's, and see if you cannot recollect the possibilities of the combined hands, and how they should be played.

You should soon be able to go over the whole ground after one good Look at the two hands, noting the distribution of the suits, the division of the honors, the sure and the possible tricks.

After a little practice of this kind every day, if you are really interested in cards, you will be astonished at the improvement in your "card memory." When you sit down for the actual play at the card table, be sure to put your newly acquired powers to the test. Take your time. All good players study the combined hands carefully before they play to the first trick. Do the same, every time you get the declaration and play the dummy. This comparison of the two hands is the whole secret, because it demands close and accurate observation, combined with attention, which is the secret of all memory.

After the hand is over, while the cards are dealing for the next hand, see if you cannot recollect the salient points in the hand you have just

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played. If you forget any particular suit, ask your partner what he had in dummy, and observe -how it will instantly recall what you had yourself.

When you are playing against the declaration, train yourself to remember dummy's cards and to compare the cards your partner leads or plays with what you see between your own hand and dummy\_

A simple example: At no-trump, your partner leads the deuce of hearts, showing only four in suit. Dummy has three hearts and you have two. Then the declarer must hold four.

As you begin to feel more and more confidence in your "card memory," you will try your skill on such inferences as depend entirely on memory. Begin with the hands in which an opponent starts with a trump declaration, and say to yourself, "He has five of that suit, at least." Count the dummy's trumps and your own, add five to it, and you will see that there is a limit to the number your partner can hold. If this limit is one, do not expect him to trump a suit twice. If it is two, and trumps have been led twice, do not expect him to trump at all.

By watching the suits in which one player fails, you can place the residue in the hand of the other, if it is not in dummy or your own

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cards. Note the number, and at the end of almost every hand you will be able to recall the fact and say to yourself, "If the declarer has two clubs left and no spades, and the hearts are all gone, the rest of his hand is diamonds, and he must have three of them."

Begin with the trump suit, if there is one. If not, begin with the suit you open, or your partner leads, and try to remember every card in it, and by whom played. Then add to your practice a memory of the suit the declarer starts with, and finally you will get to observing all the suits.

There is no great difficulty about it; it all depends on your proceeding in the right way, comparing what you actually know of the cards laid on the table by dummy or played to the tricks, with what you do not know; which is the remainder of the suit still to come. Some persons cannot count thirteen. Get out of that class. You don't belong there if you are a PELMANIST. It is foolish to say that you have a good memory for some things; but not for cards. Your memory is alike for all things if you are, interested in them, and train it in the right way.

### **SPECIAL EXERCISES FOR MIND TRAINING AND HEALTH**

#### **Fifth Lesson**

While you are dressing, and again at night while you are undressing, consider some fresh advantages of the right exercises rightly done. It is wonderful what an effect they have on one's enjoyment of life, and on one's feelings in general. A man may feel miserable, and as if the whole world were against him; but, if he goes through the right breathing and other exercises, he will end up with the opposite feeling that all his circumstances are thoroughly satisfactory, and that people are quite pleasant.

There are many reasons for this. One of them is that the right exercises draw the organs up into a better position. When a person is depressed, his organs are depressed; when he is down-hearted, his heart is down. The right exercises help to bring the organs into their proper place, and, of course, as we have seen already, the right position of, and functioning of the organs improve the circulation, and relieve the pressure of blood in the brain, the pressure that so often is one of the causes of unsatisfactory feelings.

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Then there is poise and balance. Deep and full breathing of the proper kind has a decided effect on the poise and balance of the mind, and of the body as well; and this Course of Exercises includes special movements that improve the balance of the body and the control of the different muscles.

When we get a quality for the body, it becomes far easier to get that quality for the mind as well. Similarly, if we master regularity in exercises, it is easier to master regularity in anything else that we have to do.

Another great advantage of exercises is that they are a splendid opportunity for Self-suggestion; for examples as you inhale you can suggest to yourself and imagine that you are inhaling not only the life-giving oxygen, but also vigor, energy, happiness, etc. As you exhale, you can imagine yourself as exhaling not only carbonic acid, but also everything undesirable; but it is better not to mention the undesirable things by name.

Now for a few fresh Exercises.

### **I.—In Bed**

Lying flat on your back again, hold your hands, not over your abdomen, but over your chest, one on each side, about the middle of the ribs. Close your mouth, and, as you inhale through your nostrils, send your ribs forward, and out to the sides. Hold them thus for a moment as you hold the breath in; then, as you breathe out, contract the ribs, and, at the end of the contraction, force them in gently with the hands.. Repeat this a few times without straining. This is the kind of breathing in which women as a rule excel men; they breathe better with the upper and middle part of their apparatus, whereas men breathe better with the lower. There is no reason, however, why men should not breathe much better with the middle and upper breathing, and women much better with the lower or diaphragmatic breathing.

Still lying in bed, combine the arm and leg stretchings already suggested. First, keep your left hand and arm and left leg and foot limp, and stretch your right leg stiff (with its knee back) in front of you, with the toes as far away from you as they will go. At the same time, stretch your right hand up above your head, with the fingers extended out and bent back. Let your right hand be rotated as before,

with the fingers kept stiff, as far as it will go back, and to the right. Hold it there for a moment while you are keeping the toes of your right foot as far away from you as they will go. Then, as you rotate, your hand in the 'opposite direction, so that the thumb comes out little to the right, send your heel down instead of your toes. Repeat this a few times, being sure not to grip with the left hand at all; the left hand must be limp and still. And do not poke forwards with the chin; keep the head well back. Then shake out your right foot and leg, and your right hand and arm, and let them rest, and go through the exercise with the left foot and leg, and the left arm and hand, instead. Then go through the exercise with both feet and legs and both hands and arms together. But be sure not to strain.

### **II.—Out of Bed**

Standing with your legs comfortably apart and your knees well pressed back, and not letting your heels rise from the ground at all, but keeping them planted firmly on the ground, and having your chin in, and the small of your back hollow, first bend the trunk forwards gently from the hips, then bend it back; then bend it forwards to the right, then back to the left; then forwards to the left, then back to the right.

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Keep the head and shoulders facing forwards all the time. Then rotate the trunk pretty fully, but of course without strain; send the shoulders forwards to the left; then, still forwards, across to the right; then backwards to the right; then, still backwards, across to the left; then forwards to the left again. Then reverse the direction.

Next, letting the hands swing freely, but still keeping the legs straight and stiff, and the heels firm on the ground, swing round as far as you can go with the shoulders and the trunk to the left.. The left shoulder and hand will lead the way, as it were. Then swing round in the opposite direction as far as you can go to the right. In this exercise you no longer face forwards, of course, but you allow your head to go with your shoulders.

These and other exercises should be learnt accurately by those who are keen to get the movements right, so that they may produce the best possible effect.

### **Lesson VI.**

What are the principles which link up one mental experience with another? Why do some experiences fail to obtain an association with

other experiences where the association would be advantageous? Is there a method of sorting and labeling our ideas so as to preserve them? These interesting topics are dealt with in the next lesson. You will find it wonderfully stimulating.

### **DON'TS**

1. Don't try to screw down your powers of attention.
2. Don't chastise yourself if at first, despite everything, you fail to concentrate. Resolve to see the thing through.
3. Don't forget to analyze the causes of your mind-wandering. To know them is half-way to success.
4. Don't be superficial. Go to the bottom of the subject..
5. Don't leave a sentence, when reading, until you are sure that you have grasped every idea contained in it.
6. Don't forget that Concentration is, after all, a habit, and that practice is consequently essential.

### **THIS DO**

1. Form the ideal: "I will concentrate whenever I wish to do so."
2. Make the attainment of this ideal a matter of conscience and self-respect.
3. Remember that the adage about "too many irons in the fire" is still true.
4. Become an expert in something, however ordinary it may appear to be.
5. If concentrative efforts fail, analyze the conditions.
6. Aim at ease in concentration. It saves time and energy.

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Thank you for reading...check out <http://chaoscure.com/pelmanism/>

for the rest of the series.