



VISION THERAPY Enhances Quality of Life for Patients with Myopia

When Carmen Marrero and her 10-year-old daughter walked into Dr. Samantha Slotnick's Scarsdale office, they had already seen several well-known optometrists and ophthalmologists. "Most of them said that they could help slow down my daughter's very progressive myopia, but none of them were successful in doing so," Marrero says. "Dr. Slotnick takes a very different approach, but it's that different approach that makes the way she treats each individual's vision problems so successful. She has helped my daughter in more ways than I had expected."

A behavioral optometrist, Slotnick takes a holistic, interactive approach to the treatment of myopia (nearsightedness). She says her patients in vision therapy are reporting surprising changes to their quality of life, with myopia stabilization a side effect of successful remediation.

Marrero's daughter is a case in point. After three months of therapy, she could read faster and more fluently, and she wasn't skipping lines or words. She also understood her schoolwork more easily and was spending less time on her homework. Now, after another three months, she has more good news: "I finally made the honor roll ... and I'm joining the basketball team."

This new interest in basketball was a particular surprise, Marrero says. Like many other patients with progressive myopia, her daughter had always been somewhat clumsy and disinclined to participate in team sports.

Clumsiness is one of the common factors that allow myopia to progress unchecked, Slotnick says. "Patients who develop progressive myopia are often focused, determined and detail-oriented. But they self-limit their use of distance vision: they have a strong interest in reading, they tend to hold material

very close, they lack coordination when it comes to sports, and they may tend to trip or stumble over objects or brush the side of the doorframe when walking through." It is also well documented that patients with myopia come from families that place a strong value on education, she adds. "Nothing is predetermined. Both nature and nurture play a role in myopia development."

Even in adulthood, when myopia has stopped progressing, adults maintain the same characteristics that drove their myopia when they were younger. Fortunately, the vision therapy that Slotnick prescribes can be as helpful to adults as it is to children like Marrero's daughter.

Cassandra Domeika, 30, says vision therapy has greatly impacted her ability to see the whole road while driving. "One of the biggest changes I've noticed is that before while driving, I'd have a nervous tension in my throat. I was nervous that I might miss things. After vision therapy, that stopped. I realized I was taking in the whole picture as opposed to just noticing the little details that everyone tells you to look for. Now I just see it all."

Domeika has also lowered her prescription by two steps in seven months, Slotnick says.

And myopia is not just a visual concern; it is also a very real health risk, she notes. "As myopia develops, the eyeball stretches, which places the patient at a far greater risk for retinal detachment."

While most people with myopia are accustomed to needing glasses or contact lenses, with prescriptions that increase yearly, Slotnick offers alternative treatment options, including glasses optimized for near-point vision, and optometric vision therapy to address the sources of myopia progression within the person, rather than merely compensating the eyes for the symptom of nearsightedness.

Dr. Samantha Slotnick offers free participatory workshops to better understand the origins and far-reaching impacts of vision problems, including myopia. For more information, call 914.874.1177 or visit DrSlotnick.com.