

Peripheral Vision

1. Our ancestors evolved hunting and gathering, honing skills that pick up on the peripheral, what is not directly in front of our eyes; by extension, what is not obvious, clear or immediate. We can re-member this skill.
2. Metaphorically, this also means gathering material - stuff we are not entirely conscious of - and becoming more aware of it.
 - a. So, for a hunter, this is a slight movement behind a tree off to my left, which could be game; for us, it could be a nagging feeling that arises as if from over our left shoulder, reminding us that we feel over-committed but have successfully buried this feeling so that we can fulfil our responsibilities. Becoming more aware of this, or being reminded of it as we walk and remove our focus from what is right in front of us - what is obviously conscious - we can face it, question why we feel over-committed, maybe consider changing our values or aims rather than continuously putting up with it.
3. We practise this walking, or even standing still, in nature, so that the landscape, the elements, whatever arises from the more-than-human world can help us to remember. This also means that there is a stronger likelihood that the message, the reminder, may be reconsidered in light of our relationship to nature. I like to think we can be drawn along, towards more ecologically responsible ways, by allowing nature to remind us about what is important.
4. A way of practising that is not dependent on being outdoors:
Begin by taking a few deep breaths. I encourage you to let your mind go foggy, in order to tap into a dreamlike state. Thus, it's not just about peripheral vision, in the sense of widening our visual sensual apparatus. It's also about shifting focus away from the directed fashion of thinking that is so prevalent in modern society. Another analogy is comparing it to the feeling we have when falling asleep or waking up. This 'foggy' state is more like a Zen attitude of not knowing, which is curious and open, not directed and closed. We are also not seeking meaning, understanding, or even clarity. Being open to what arises is the goal. This is about perspective-broadening. Whatever arises in this foggy, not-knowing, peripheral field may provide useful information for our ecological awakening. Stay in this space, breathe into the openness. Give it at least 10 minutes. Journal the results and share them with a peer.