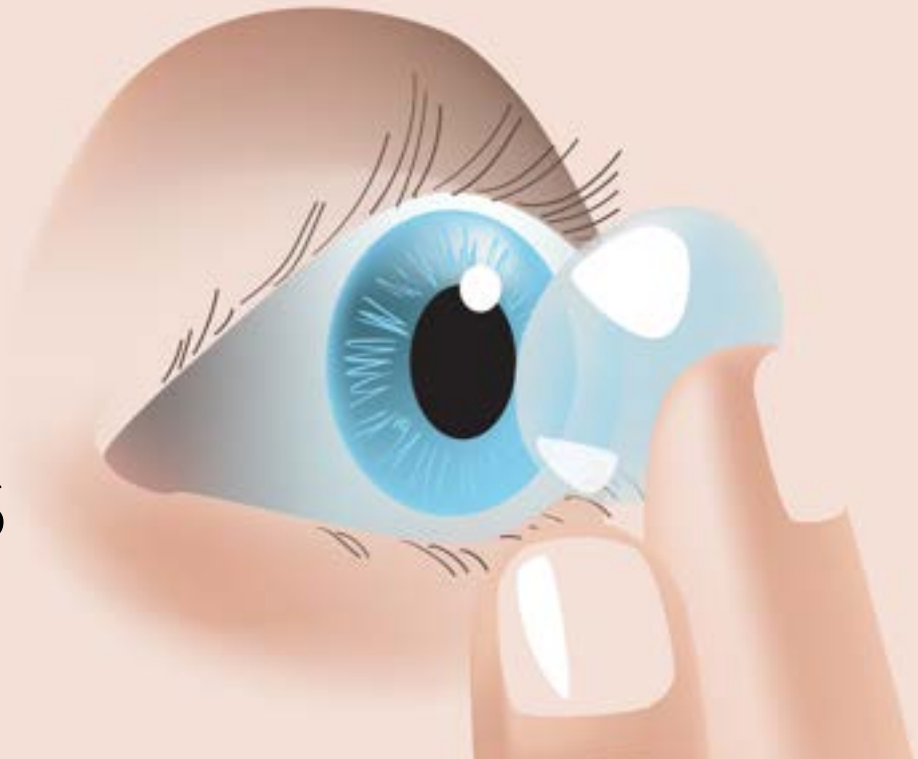




# Lessons Learned From Contact Lenses

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Everything that there is to learn about mindset, resilience, and perseverance I learned today at Costco, while trying to put in contact lenses. Granted, there are so many life lessons going on at Costco in general, like the power of the human mind that can convince you that you urgently need a kayak when really you came to buy toilet paper. But today I'm referring only to the optical department, and the experience of trying to put in contact lenses for the very first time.

It was something I never thought much about until my teenage daughter got contacts two years ago; I started wondering why I was still wearing glasses. I was ready to change things up a bit and this was a good, simple solution.

So here I was at Costco for my 11:00 a.m. appointment.

"How long should I give it?" I casually asked the helpful contact-lens coach.

"We will give it up to an hour," was her equally casual reply.

I looked at her in disbelief; I had assumed 20 minutes was enough time.

"I had better be done in less time than that!" I said with a little less confidence than I had felt two minutes earlier.

And so, we started.

I looked in the mirror and started to blink a lot. I kept blinking a lot. I couldn't touch my eye.

How can I touch my eye?! Images of poking a hole through my eye and poking my brain were flashing through my mind.

This wasn't going to work.

It was time to practice all the skills I knew.

Time for more affirmations and getting rid of false beliefs. *You can do this*, I whispered to myself.

I took some deep breaths.

I peered into the mirror.

*You can do this, you can touch your eye. Your eyeball won't fall out. And you can most definitely not blink for at least ten seconds.*

I thought about a recent podcast I'd listened to about creating new neural pathways. Sometimes our brain just needs to be rewired.

Well, I definitely needed some new neural pathways right here and right now. I urgently needed to replace the old ones, the ones that told my brain: Don't touch your eyeball! It's not safe, you'll knock your eye out, or worse yet, poke your finger right through.

I practiced. I touched my eyeball. I held the lens on my finger and could feel the muscle-like texture of the eyeball. One second. Then two seconds. Then three. Calmly. Focused.

And I stared in the mirror; *look, you can hold your eye open and not blink!*

*Two seconds, then five, then eight and then ten seconds of no blinking! See, you do not blink more than anyone else. You can do this.*

The clock was ticking. We were coming on half an hour.

*I can do this; I can do this.*

*My daughter does this, I can do this.*

My confidence was growing.

# “THE DOCTOR WILL BE OUT IN A MOMENT AND HE WILL TAKE THEM OUT FOR YOU. YOU CAN COME BACK ANOTHER DAY TO TRY AGAIN.”

So was my impatience.

I needed some positive reinforcement and encouragement.

So I turned to my lenses coach who seemed to also be the secretary.

“How am I doing? Do you see how I’ve improved and can actually hold my eye open?” I half asked, half told her, waiting expectantly for her acknowledgement and accolades.

“Oh yeah, you definitely are!” she responded. It wasn’t as authentic as I’d hoped but it was enough to fill me at the moment and fuel me on. Because I was doing so much better. *I’ve got this!*

*Take it easy, there’s no rush,* I told myself.

*Just focus on what you are trying to do, the steps you need to take.*

*Take in what’s in front of you.*

I took a moment to eye each player in the game.

I narrowed it down to my eyelids, my eyeball, my fingers, the little lens.

Just four components.

The rest was just noise, distraction.

*Look in the mirror. See your eyeball. See your eyelids.*

*Look at the lens on your finger, and move slowly, steadily.*

*You can do this.*

At 35 past the hour, I got in lens number one!

My optimism doubled; *I’ve got this!*

By 40 minutes, number two was in. I was elated.

But I wasn’t done; now I had to take them out.

My very bored and no-longer-interested lenses coach gave me directions.

*Pinch my eyeball? Are you crazy?*

More new neural pathways needed. ASAP.

*You won’t hurt your eyeball. Your eyeball is made of tough stuff.*

*Swipe your eyeball.*

The clock hits an hour.

“The doctor will be out in a moment and he will take them out for you. You can come back another day to try again.”

No, no, no way! There was no way I was going to come back and do this again. I had to do it today.

Taking a deep breath and more motivated than ever, I focused on the four players. A couple swipes later, I triumphantly had them both out.

I was ecstatic. Overjoyed. I did it! I turned around, waiting to get the standing ovation I felt I deserved.

Crickets. No one even noticed. Everyone in the office was caught up in their own world; my big achievement was just for me.

“I did it!” I announced to the secretary, and she did her best to pretend to be duly impressed and agreed I didn’t have to come back.

She packed up my contacts and paraphernalia and I practically danced out the door.

Postscript: I haven’t tried it again since then, but I’m optimistic I can do it. I did it once, I can do it again and even (hopefully) beat my record of one hour.

Putting in contacts is really no different than everything in life. True, most things can’t be resolved in an hour. But we can do almost anything that we are determined to do, if we can make it through the process without giving up. ❧



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