

The Alexander Technique (Sept. 2004)

The Alexander Technique was discovered by F.M. Alexander, an Australian Recitation, over a hundred years ago. Simply defined as movement re-education, the Alexander Technique helps people to become aware of poor movement habits, and then to permanently change them. We move our bodies based on unconscious parameters, developed over a lifetime of responses to injuries, emotions, physical environments, and a basic lack of awareness about ourselves.

These parameters of thought cause our habits of movement. For example, most people will shorten their neck when sitting down in a chair, and not even realize it. They may think that their face is their whole head, therefore being unaware of their head/neck relationship. They may be unknowingly fixating their eyes on a single point, therefore orienting the face upwards, as the body is moving downwards into the chair, and shortening their neck. Logically, it makes no sense to look up while moving down. However, people do it anyway, from a lack of kinesthetic awareness of their own body.

Such habits are very difficult to break without the outside guidance of an Alexander Teacher. With a gentle, hands-on touch, she would ask the student to **not** shorten their neck while sitting, thereby discovering, first hand, what it feels like to move in a new way. Since most of the habits involve shortening and tightening, there is a sense of release, lengthening and widening of the body, and a freedom of movement during a lesson (session).

The Alexander Technique also asks the mind to become more aware of the body, to step in and say "no" to the poor habit patterns, not permitting them to occur. Once the old impulse to contract is stopped, the mind is then asked to "stay out of the way" of the emerging movement, to allow the body's inherent movement to occur without interference. In the beginning, this is much easier said than done. It is vital to have the direct and immediate feedback of the teacher to develop this skill. Over time, these new thought patterns, and hence the resulting movement patterns, will become easy and fluid.

Through the Alexander Technique, a student will get to know themselves, on a basic and profound level that isn't generally taught in our culture. They will discover increased body awareness, a deepened mind-body connection, and an ease of movement that gives them presence, authenticity, and grace.

Who benefits??

- Anybody who is curious about their bodies, interested in knowing themselves better, or looking to change.
- Anybody who uses their body as an instrument for their life's work, such as a musician, actor, singer, dancer, artist and athletes of all kinds.
- Anybody who is in chronic pain from muscle tension.
- Anybody who uses their body as a primary form of communication to another, such as horseback riders.
- Anybody who has questions as to how to move, lift, bend, carry, breathe as part of daily life.

by Jennifer Stanger

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