

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2002

1. SURVIVING CHRISTMAS WITH A MODICUM OF SERENITY AND A FREE NECK

With Christmas racing up, the burning issue for December has to be how can the Alexander Technique help you to get through Christmas serenely?

Given that a lot of you will already be running around thinking: 'Oh dear, Christmas presents. Oh dear, Christmas cards. Oh dear, Christmas. Oh my ears and whiskers' etc. etc. on this occasion we shall confine ourselves to bullet points.

- Make time in your day for self-care. You may have to tramp the shopping mall for hours, but set limits before you start and stick to them. Factor into the day, time for even 10-15 minutes in semi-supine.
- Do regular reality checks. When you hear yourself rehearsing long lists of 'Have to's, Need to's and Musts', take the time to ask yourself *Why?* (This is Alexandrian inhibition; i.e. rejecting knee-jerk activity in favour of a moment of thoughtful space.) If you can't find a good answer to the question why, explore whether the world will fall apart if you don't do whatever it is.
- Treat Christmas shopping as you would an assault course. Remember you are running a pseudo-military campaign, not indulging in a pleasurable outing. Anticipate casualties, i.e. your feet, nerves, wallet.
- Limit yourself to a nodding acquaintance with turkey. Avoid carrying it, cooking it, lifting it in and out of the oven, even eating it. Just nod to it whenever necessary, letting your eyes lead your head gently up and down.
- Rationalise present wrapping. Present wrapping is a great opportunity to do nasty things to your back. Explain to all and sundry that this is going to be a 'hands on' Christmas then hand them the paper, Sellotape etc. and ask them – nicely- to wrap their own presents. Tell them not to peep while they're doing it.
- Over-shopping for groceries. 20% of food bought in supermarkets throughout the year goes directly from the car to the fridge to the bin. This Christmas make things simpler by binning a sizeable proportion of what you buy directly you get home. This saves you the stress of: worrying where to store it; how to cook it; the risk of food poisoning; when to eat it; how to force feed family and friends with it; what it will look like on your hips....
- Family harmony. We all know that Christmas can be a stressful time for families. Take time out to tell your loved ones how much you love them. Then maintain a Trappist silence until the festivities are over.
- Take the opportunity of a lifetime to go trekking in Nepal.
- Hibernate.
- Emigrate.

2. THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE AND SPIRITUAL CLARITY

A Western Buddhist woman was in India, studying with her teacher. She was riding with another woman friend in a rickshaw-like carriage when they were attacked by a man on the street. In the end, the attacker only succeeded in frightening the women, but the Buddhist woman was quite upset by the event and told her teacher so. She asked him what she should have done, what he considered would have been the appropriate Buddhist response.

The teacher paused and thought for a moment, then he said: 'Very mindfully and with great compassion, you should have taken your umbrella and whacked your attacker over the head with it.'

Had she asked her AT teacher, the reply might have gone something like this: 'Pause long enough to think of the best means of doing what you want to, then free your neck; think about your arm connecting into your back as you raise your umbrella and let the power of your back bring the umbrella down over your attacker's head.'

What about the compassion? you might ask. The AT is about bringing your clearest intention and best use of your physical self to whatever it is you choose to do in any given circumstance..... even hibernating.

3. FUTURE EVENTS

We will be running workshops on Problems with Posture in the New Year on:
18th January 10a.m-12p.m. at Friends Meeting House 120 Heath St Hampstead, London N.W.3
25th January 2003 10a.m-1.p.m. Healthy Living Centre 282 St Paul's Road, London N.1
2LH 020 7704 6900 07939 347099
1st February 2003 10a.m.-12p.m. at Friends Meeting House, 7 Balgores Crescent, Romford.

We look forward to having our website www.nopain-gain.com up and running in January.

4. DOING NOTHING

Recently Annie had a lesson with Walter Carrington, *the grand old man of the Alexander Technique*. It quite blew her away. Walter spent a long time, standing to one side of Annie, with his hand lying along her back, *doing absolutely nothing*. His hand asked nothing but communicated the following very clear message: You don't have to do anything. You don't have to be in the future. You don't have to be in the past. Be where you are. The present is this moment. The present is this space. None of your other concerns have any bearing on this moment.

We equate the everyday busyness, the stresses, the worries, the 'must do's' with our daily reality. But if we truly let go of them for even the shortest time, we empower our underlying sense of serenity and well being to shine through.

Let this Christmas be a special time of *being with* rather than *doing for*. This Christmas be with your loved ones and yourself; don't fall into the trap of doing for them.

Our warmest wishes for a joyful, *being* Christmas and a serene New Year.

Madelene and Annie

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