

ALEXANDER NEWSLETTER 2003

THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR PEOPLE EVERYWHERE WHO WANT TO TAKE THE STRESS OUT OF THE FESTIVE SEASON AND PUT THE JOY BACK IN.

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1. CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR...

usually around the beginning of November, if not before - and when it does it appears to have a curious effect on all and sundry. You only have to think about the people you know; they are likely to include:

- The Headless Chicken; currently clucking through a shopping mall near you, accumulating gifts in a desperate attempt to get on top of things
- The Military Strategist: this person starts wrapping presents in October and may even use spreadsheets as an aid to precision planning
- The Christmas Curmudgeon; the generally pleasant member of society who metamorphoses before your very eyes into a misanthropist of epic proportions
- Superwoman; on a mission to prove that you can work 23 hours a day, have a perfect home life, cook like an angel, gush right through Christmas and... pass the Krypton, please, someone.
- Johnny Last Minute; the rugged non-conformist -usually male- who refuses to do his shopping before Christmas Eve and 'doesn't know what all the fuss is about', not least because someone else is cooking the dinner etc. etc.
- The Worrier; generally of the female persuasion, this person knows that Christmas will be ruined if even the lowliest of the stocking fillers fails to meet with universal rapturous approval

We could go on. Suffice it to say that, in our humble opinion, the stimulus of Christmas simply serves to exacerbate innate habits of thought. When the pressure is on, and the stakes are raised, as at Christmas, we become strangely single-minded, and strangely driven. So much to do, so little time. And, of course, there's so much riding on getting it all done *perfectly*.

But is there? Really? This is where we would urge you to let a little Alexander thinking kick in. Does it really matter if the supermarket is out of sprouts? Is it worth doing another lap of honour through the shops in case you find one more thing that someone might like? Are you really meant to feel like you've just done a triathlon by the time Christmas morning arrives? We don't think so.

So this year, when you feel your chest tighten as the famous phrase: 'I've got to...' forms on your lips, just stop and ask yourself: 'What's the worst that will happen if I don't? What choices do I have?' and step back into being in charge of yourself.

The secular meaning of Christmas, as we understand it, is about being with the people we love and who love us. (Retail therapy, our health conscious government will soon inform us, is for no more than 360 days a year.) When you feel Christmas-mania cutting in, stop rushing, start breathing and remember that you can release seasonal tensions and you can choose your emotion. This year, why not choose joy?

2. HOW TO DEAL WITH LIFE'S PROBLEMS AND ALEXANDER XMAS QUIZ

Tony, Gordon and Peter always meet once a week in Islington to discuss the world's situation. On this occasion, they are trying to solve the problem of life.

"What is the problem of life?" asks Tony.

The more they talk about it, the more they think they know the answer. The problem of life is that everyone has worries. "If people didn't have any worries," says Gordon, "then life would be easy."

But now that they know, another question remains; how can we three end our worries?

They think for a while and then Peter says, "I know. Why don't we hire somebody to do all the worrying for us so that we can then have it easy?"

Tony says, "Great idea. It won't be easy, I know, but between us, we could pay him well to make up for the difficulty of the role."

So they all agree to chip in to pay someone £600 a month to do all their worrying for them.

They are really happy with this decision until Gordon points out the flaw.

"Tell me," he says, "If he's making £600 each month, what has he got to worry about?"

And so, gentle reader, our Christmas poser for you is: how could Tony, Gordon and Peter have resolved their problem successfully?

E-mail the answer to us at info@www.nopain-gain.com . The person submitting the first correct answer will be entitled to a free Alexander running lesson in January 2004.

3. AN APOLOGY TO OUR READERS

Last month's newsletter brought a storm of protest from our readers. Some expressed their disappointment that our lovely website builder did not figure in the November issue: 'so good natured and so carnivorous. Rob is an inspiration to us all', one said.

Others berated us for our comments re: the safety, or otherwise, of small mammals in Kent. The Rob Dubery Support Group, which has now merged with the Kent Omnivores, has informed us, in no uncertain terms, that we had no right to malign a fine Englishman on the basis of seditious rumours. One idiosyncrasy, they point out, is no reason to hang a man.

We agree, totally. A barbecue habit is neither good nor bad, it just is. We'd be the first to acknowledge that. And if Rob wants to barbecue all year long, breakfast, lunch and tea, we don't have a problem with that; especially if we run the risk of a –metaphorical – roasting by the Support Group. Provided we are not added to the list of things Rob might like to barbecue, we're cool.

Next month we hope Rob himself might provide us with a brief report on how to cook a traditional Christmas lunch on the barbecue. We can't wait. Go Rob, barbecue that sprout. And watch out, Nigella, there's a new kid on the patio!

4. WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO THIS MONTH

In November Madelene started taking lessons in the Shaw Method of Swimming. Steven Shaw is an Alexander teacher and former competitive swimmer who teaches people how they can 'improve performance and enhance enjoyment of the water'. Find out more about the Shaw Method at www.artofswimming.com.

Madelene, who is 'quite a good swimmer', was surprised at how differently she was asked to think about her swimming and what a challenge it is to learn this new approach. However, with just a little input from Steven, her experience of moving through the water improved quite dramatically.

Annie spent the month working on an e-book, of which more next month. Annie and Madelene's extramural activities this month have reminded them how effective the Alexander Technique is in providing both the means and the structure for the confident management of change.

5. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Throughout December Annie will be running individual complementary Alexander Technique taster sessions at Belsize Health, 16 England's Lane, London NW3 on Monday afternoons between 1.30 and 5.30. Book now on 0834 6442341.

**Madelene will be running an Alexander Technique Introductory class on Saturday 24th January 2004- 3pm until 6pm at Shine Holistic, 52 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16. Call 07939 347099 or Shine on 7241 5033 for more information.
May you mosey through the festive season in peace and joy,**

Annie and Madelene

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