

ALEXANDER NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2004

THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKING FOR MORE BALANCE IN THEIR LIFE.

The Alexander Newsletter is distributed to around 400 readers; we are growing at the rate of about 50 per month and would like to reach an audience of 1000 by December 2004.

Thanks to everyone who forwards the newsletter on – keep up the good work!

WE GROW THROUGH YOUR RECOMMENDATION – PLEASE FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER TO A FEW FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES.

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1. DO YOU CURRENTLY SUFFER WITH ‘HUMOUROIDS’?

If you have even started to read this paragraph, then the answer must be a resounding ‘no’ – even before we have established exactly what humouroids are. First and foremost it is not a misspelling of that other much harder to spell word whose meaning is clear to all. Robert Holden mentions humouroids in his delightful book ‘Happiness Now’ and defines them as a *‘hardening of the attitudes which cause piles of problems’*.

But now that you know what humouroids are, gentle reader, can you honestly say that you have never suffered with them? Madelene and Annie, hand on heart, have to admit that they were afflicted with them... before they discovered the Alexander Technique.

Now February’s newsletter is not intended either as True Confessions or a scurrilous play on words. Alexander teachers don’t do that stuff; but they do help people to reverse the hardening of attitudes which causes piles of problems.

This month we have been thinking about how humouroids affect balance. A humouroid develops when something occurs that interferes with our habitual, automatic balance. Our initial response is one of apprehension; concern that what we have lost is irretrievable, an urgent need to control and limit the damage, the determination to set an alternative strategy in place as swiftly as possible.

Notice how there is no thought of experimentation here, of trying different strategies; a solution must be found forthwith. Once it has been established it is repeated endlessly. If it proves unsatisfactory, then a conviction that balance has become unattainable leads to a hardening of the attitudes which, in turn, can produce literally piles of other problems.

Suppose you feel, as some of our pupils do, that your physical balance is poor. Keeping that piece of information in mind, you will attempt to achieve your physical goals, as in the case of the venerable lady bowler described in item 3. It almost becomes a case of going into movement with one foot on the brake and the other on the accelerator: the body is going for it, but the head is saying: ‘it’s not going to work properly’.

This happens because you want to perform the same movement as you once did. You therefore presume that you have to perform it in the same way as you once did, when there are other options that will be easier and more effective. The governing principle is always as Don Weed defines it:

‘The poise of a person’s head
in its dynamic relationship with his or her body
in movement
is the key to freedom
and ease of motion.’

Humouroids are a nasty affliction that, if left untreated, can cause ongoing physical – and emotional – discomfort. Happily, a healthy diet of self-awareness and subtle experimentation will eradicate them. This month why not see where you can be a humoiroid buster?

2. HOW ONE HEAD IN DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BODY CAN BE BETTER THAN TWO

Michael drives his friend Roger to the shops in West London. As they get out of the car, Michael locks the doors in such a hurry that he forgets to remove the ignition key first.

"Oh no," says Michael.

"Why don't we get a coat hanger to open the door?" says Roger.

"No, I don't think that'll work," replies Michael, "because passers-by will think we're breaking into the car."

"OK," suggests Roger. "We can use a penknife to cut the rubber seal around the driver's door, then I can stick in a finger and pull out the key."

"No, absolutely not," replies Michael. "Passers-by will think we're stupid for not using a coat hanger."

"OK," says Roger, "you'd better think of something else and quick. It's starting to rain and your sun-roof's still open."

3. 'DON'T PUT YOUR MOTHER IN THE CHAIR, MISS WORTHING'

Annie's mother is a formidable character, a Great British Eccentric, small in size, but of enormous Margaret Rutherford-esque stature, a Force To Be Reckoned With. She is not a woman given to complaining, so, when she expressed her concern that she would not be able to acquit herself honourably in a bowls match with her 'toy boys' (Editors note: mere striplings of 70 or so), because her balance was increasingly poor, Annie sat up and took notice.

Annie's mother went on to explain that she had got herself a bowler's stick – for the uninitiated a walking stick with what looks like a sink plunger on the end, which an elderly bowler is meant to use to steady him- or herself. Annie became concerned because, all too often, people lean on a stick to support themselves and thus aggravate the already unbalanced use of their body and become increasingly dependent on the stick.

With uncharacteristic meekness, she suggested to her mother that, as Alexander teachers' work is largely focused on helping people to move more successfully, she might be able to help her. To her surprise, her mother agreed and then began the Alexander lesson from hell. As they worked, the well known adages about never working with animals and children, or in this case parents.

Annie has no recall of long car journeys spent goading her parents to the limit with the 'Are we nearly there?' question –and, doubtless never did, but there was a curious sense of pay-back time about the lesson. As Annie was patiently bringing her mother back into her back, establishing some co-ordination throughout her body and getting her to let her feet support her on the floor, her mother kept asking: 'Can I show you how I deliver the wood [throw the ball] now?'

Gentle admonitions to let her heels go to the floor produced a veritable flood of back-chat that our dear pupils never indulge in. (We would like to take this opportunity of commending one and all for their perfect observance of Alexander protocols.) 'Let your head balance lightly on the top of your spine' was countered with: 'Where else do you think it would be?'

'Just take the time to come back into balance, before you step forward', met with: 'Can't I get on with it. I have no patience, you know. None at all.'

Last month we talked about outcomes. Annie and her mother both wanted to see the same outcome of a more balanced delivery of the woods. (We shall resolutely ignore all opportunities for wise-cracks and puns.)

What Annie's mother lacks in patience she more than compensates for in application. Not only did she manage to improve her delivery significantly, but she has become aware of what she was doing to interfere with her balance and how she can keep improving it. Better still, the best bowler in the club has confirmed the principles that Annie imparted to her; conclusive proof that Annie must know *something*.

In one brief lesson, and in spite of constant complaints, Annie's mother has acquired enough material for several months' work, while Annie has learned that you don't put your mother in the chair lightly.

FUTURE EVENTS

This month, why not offer your loved one the ultimate gift of physical and emotional balance with the Valentine's special Alexander Technique and Life Coaching package at Belsize Health, 16 England's Lane, London NW3?

4 individual Alexander lessons and 4 individual Life Coaching sessions for the bargain price of £250. Together, they provide the resources and stimuli to eradicate hardened attitudes and sweep away piles of long-standing problems.

For more information call Annie on: 07712 924124 or Madelene on 07939 347099.

Have a great February

Annie and Madelene

DON'T KEEP US A SECRET. IF YOU LIKE IT, PLEASE FORWARD THIS E-NEWSLETTER TO FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES WHO YOU THINK COULD BENEFIT FROM SOME AT INPUT.

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