

**ALEXANDER NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2004  
THE VENETIAN ISSUE**

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR PEOPLE WHO REFUSE TO BE BOUND AND LIMITED BY ROUTINE.**

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**A TIME FOR NEW RESOLUTIONS OR NEW OUTCOMES?**

**Don't you just love January? The Festive Season is over and *things* return to normal – or, more precisely, you settle back cosily into your habits and routine. And you have choices to either make, or duck. You can:**

**a) lament the various ravages of the past month on your waistline, bank account and energy levels etc. etc. and raise one bleary eye just long enough to state your New Year's resolutions – and we all know how those generally turn out -**

**or**

**b) think about creating different outcomes.**

**Is there a difference between making resolutions and creating outcomes? We certainly think so.**

**A resolution is when you decide that your life is going to look totally different. Your intention is to achieve profound and lasting metamorphosis simply as a result of making one sweeping change such as acquiring a six-pack or giving up smoking. Yet even while you set your sights on that one change the rest of your life-style is unaffected: e.g. you resolve to diet for Britain, but still spend the hours in front of the TV and the old cravings duly kick in...**

**Creating a different outcome, on the other hand, requires a shift in your perspective that, in turn, produces a series of changes both within and around you.**

**A fairly basic, but nonetheless edifying anecdote may serve to illustrate how this works. Venice, a.k.a. La Serenissima, is a city of many elegant hotels and restaurants and few public toilets.**

**Now empirical evidence has shown that hotel and restaurant staff don't always take pity on the needy. Even in this most courteous city requests to use upmarket loos are frequently refused. The would-be loo goer is thus left with a number of choices. These include:**

- a) repeating the same procedure again and again and hoping you'll get lucky (this is a variation on the 'I'll just keep banging my head against a brick wall' strategy)**
- b) drawing the inference that it doesn't work because the hospitality industry is full of sadists**
- c) thinking what you can change so as to create the outcome you want... and *need*, by now.**

**Annie's daughter is no slouch when it comes to thinking on her feet. Sweeping determinedly into one of the Leading Hotels of the World, no less, she eyeballed the concierge and asked, apparently artlessly: 'Excuse me, where is your toilet?' The concierge promptly answered the question posed, in meticulous detail....**

**How does this relate to the Alexander Technique?**

**Well, as Don Weed, an American Alexander teacher puts it: 'What you think is what you get'. While your thinking - whether it be about body related issues or emotional and analytical matters -remains in old patterns, it won't produce new and different results. Old patterns and familiar results can lead to bleak conclusions about the impossibility of change. Different questions produce different data and different possibilities.**

This month instead of focusing on the parts of you that you might feel need replacing, spare a thought for the fact that you do have a number of smoothly functioning parts. Notice when your body is turning over nicely and ask yourself what makes for the difference: the information you glean may well prove useful on the days when you feel barely roadworthy. And remember that you're far more than the sum of a few faulty parts; you do actually function as a co-ordinated whole.

#### STEPPING OUT OF THE KNOWN

Christopher and Yvonne were approaching their Golden Wedding anniversary. One summer evening, as they were taking a slow walk in their local park, Yvonne suddenly takes her walking stick and hits Christopher hard across his back with it.

"What on earth did you do that for? It really hurts." he shouts at her.

Yvonne replies, "That's for 50 years of lousy sex."

Christopher thinks for a while and then takes his walking stick and hits Yvonne hard across her backside with it.

"Ouch," she screams. "What was that for?"

Christopher looks at her and replies, "That's for knowing the difference."

#### WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO THIS MONTH

While Madelene celebrated Christmas quietly in Leicestershire with good friends, Annie and daughter indulged their passion for Venice. Irrespective of the weather, they walked for 8-10 hours a day in their determination to see all the churches, museums, canals, bridges, shops etc.

Truly a city of infinite wonders, its food is, at best, as memorable as the sights and ristorante *Ai Mercanti* came out a clear favourite, while *Tiziano* in Cannareggio is a shrine to the peerless Venetian tramezzino, a.k.a. the sandwich's finest hour; eat your heart out Pret a Manger.

A visit to the splendid Ca' Rezzonico gallery as the sun was going down, to see some delightful Tiepolo frescos depicting secular subjects (and no Doges for once), proved more eventful than anticipated. Something about the Venice air seemed to unsettle contact lenses and one shot out of Annie's daughter's eye.

Without moving their feet, Annie and daughter threw off their coats, dropped to their knees in the semi-darkness and started feeling about the marble floor for the missing lens. While an obliging guard went off to search for a torch, a small crowd gathered to watch, unsure whether this was some curious new trend that they should participate in.

Alexander teachers often point out to pupils that since they don't have eyes in their nether ends, it is futile to try to 'look' for the chair with one's bottom before sitting. Still, Annie and daughter clearly registered the gaze fixed on the most visible part of their anatomy as they searched.

Not entirely without embarrassment, Annie explained the predicament to the assembled throng, in three languages, and offered a free Alexander lesson to the first person to find the lens.

Seemingly, the cultured visitors to Ca' Rezzonico are all entirely loyal to their own Alexander teacher, for none came forward. But the offending lens was found and the quaint English ritual of proceeding through ill-lit art galleries on all fours was abandoned.

N.B. While there *is* a lot to be said for crawling as a means of strengthening the back and improving co-ordination –especially with the guidance of an Alexander teacher - we don't recommend the faint-hearted to try it in public places.

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Madelene will be running an Alexander Technique Introductory class on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> 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.  
Have a great January**

## **5. THE BRUSSELS SPROUT UPDATE**

**We had been looking forward, with bated breath, to hearing how the sprouts and turkey stuffing – or *dressing* as our American readers modestly term it – fared on the Dubery Christmas barbecue. But our research reveals that the Christmas meal was too important, and/or complex, to be entrusted to Rob's panoply of barbecues. As Alexander teachers we can only applaud Rob for stepping out of his habit on this occasion.**

**Have a great January,**

**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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