

## NEWSLETTER JUNE 2003

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO STEP OUT OF  
CONDITIONED RESPONSES AND INTO NEW CHOICES.**

1. **60 Second tip**
2. **Of computers and petards**
3. **Joke: the gentler sex?**
4. **Future events**
5. **Back care quest**

### 1. **60 SECOND TIP BETTER WASHING UP**

Pretty well everyone has very strong ideas about how best to do the washing up. (One or two people even *enjoy* doing it, but probably wouldn't want to admit that publicly.) If you do it well, everything ends up sparkling the way it does in the adverts. So why don't you end up with a grin of manic satisfaction? Probably, because it's uncomfortable work not least because you assume, unconsciously, that you can't do a good job and 'use yourself' well at the same time. First challenge your conditioning: Why not? Then, challenge your thinking: How can you use yourself better? Sure you have to incline forward over the sink, but there is more than one way of washing a plate. You can be like one of those desk lamps that you bend into any shape you choose; or you could be like an angle poise lamp that you raise and lower by increasing the angle at its joints. In that case bending the knees will allow you to incline from the hip joint and let your face drop slightly forward from just below the skull. And remember that even when you are doing one task, you don't have to remain fixed to the spot; you can and should move about a bit.

### 2. **OF COMPUTERS AND PETARDS**

Nearly a month on, Madelene and Annie are still revelling in the delights of being in cyberspace, still nonchalantly dropping into conversations: 'You can see it on my website', in the way that other people might say: 'Would you like to see my new Porsche'. (To paraphrase Susan Howatch : 'Alexander Teachers Are Different'.)

But we have to admit that our valiant labours have cost us dear. Long hours spent 'glowing' over a hot keyboard or engaged in 'cyber-conferences' [sic] with midwife Rob Dubery (our lovely web site builder), have wreaked havoc on our delicate, Alexanderised systems. Only recently have we admitted to each other – albeit, shamefacedly and in hushed tones - that the process has caused a few computer-generated aches and pains!!!

Now this is where the petard comes in. Given our long Alexander education *and* the message that we constantly repeat to our pupils, this need not have happened. We are licensed (no less!) to free our necks, come back into our backs, get up, walk twice round the desk etc. etc. In other words, we have a choice. In these specific circumstances, as often as not, we chose not to exercise it.

Can we justify our choice? Not really. But perhaps this is the point. First we acquire the knowledge that enables us to make informed choices. Then we select our priorities. We can do that consciously and intelligently, or else we can just revert to our habitual mental default button. The Alexander Technique is a superb tool *and* it is only as good as we are.

Our learning curve for this month has been around this. Our default button takes us into that curious misnomer, our comfort zone. Among the many Things Our Parents Didn't

**Tell Us is that comfort zones need not be pleasant places. Their attraction is purely that they exempt us from the mental effort of being present with ourselves.**

**Given our little peccadillos over the past month we would like to take our hats off to all our wonderful pupils who do such a great job of making intelligent choices in their daily activity.**

**Finally, let us spare a thought for the petard. The word rolls gloriously off the tongue and always reminds us of the exuberant prose of Rabelais - and of its derivation from the Gallic verb 'péter' - anaemically translated as 'to pass wind'.**

#### **1. THE GENTLER SEX**

N.B. As the Politically Correct Police still have not rumbled us and New Men and Unreconstructed Men everywhere are all too busy baking bread or obsessing about football - respectively - to register a protest, we thought we would chance another sexual stereotype joke. If next month we are offering a recipe for brown rice, Quorn and bean sprouts in this spot, you will know that our luck has finally run out. So here goes:

**The CIA had an opening for an assassin. After all of the background checks, interviews, and testing were done there were three finalists...Two men and a woman.**

**For the final test, the CIA agents took one of the men to a large metal door and handed him a gun.**

**"We must know that you will follow your instructions, no matter what the circumstances. Inside this room, you will find your wife sitting in a chair. Kill Her!!!"**

**The man said, "You can't be serious. I could never shoot my wife."**

**The agent said, "Then you're not the right person for this job."**

**The second man was given the same instructions. He took the gun and went into the room. All was quiet for about five minutes. Then the man came out with tears in his eyes." I tried, but I can't kill my wife."**

**The agent said, "You don't have what it takes. Take your wife and go home."**

**Finally, it was the woman's turn. She was given the same instructions to kill her husband. She took the gun and went into the room. Shots were heard, one shot after another. They heard screaming, crashing, banging on the walls.**

**After a few minutes, all was quiet. The door opened slowly and there stood the woman. She wiped the sweat from her brow, and said, "The gun was loaded with blanks. I had to beat him to death with the chair."**

**The said lady's behaviour is open to interpretation. Was she:**

- a) stepping out of conditioned responses and making new choices? Or**
- b) particularly bad at inhibiting -i.e. saying 'no' - to a habit of blind obedience to authority figures?**

**Finally, had she had Alexander lessons, would she have viewed the chair in a different light???**

#### **4. FUTURE EVENTS**

**Sunday 15 June is the Stoke Newington Festival. If you would like to meet Madelene and have questions answered, Madelene will be at stalls for 'Shine Holistic' and 'Healthy Living Centre'. For further details call: 0208 533 6476 or 09739 347099**

**Sunday 22nd June 10am-1pm, Healthy Living Centre, 282 St. Paul's Road N1 2LH  
3 hour group introduction to the Alexander Technique with follow up private lesson-£50  
For details call: 0208 533 6476 or 07939347099**

**Saturday 28th June 2-5pm, Shine Holistic 52 Church Street Stoke Newington N16 ONB,  
3 hour group introduction with follow up private lesson-£50  
For details call: 0208 533 6476 or 07939 347099**

**Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> June 10am-12p.m. Integrated Medical Care, 94 Station Lane, Hornchurch,  
Essex RM12 6LX. What is the Alexander Technique and what can it offer you?  
Interactive workshop Cost £40  
For details call: 01708 445156**

## **5. BACK CARE QUEST**

**Madelene and Annie are not unduly concerned with taking ourselves too seriously – too much *gravitas* just leads to more muscular tension. Things we do take very seriously are the Alexander Technique, our pupils' well being and ongoing education about preventive care and awareness.**

**Annie is starting a project geared to educating people about daily activities that give rise to physical pain and problems, and would welcome your input. All too often we only become aware of the relationship between cause and effects when we are stuck with suffering the effects.**

**Your experience or observation can surely benefit others. So please go to [groups.yahoo.com/group/backcarequest](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/backcarequest) if you would be happy to share them. Please also pass this information onto other people who might be interested.**

**Have a great and light-hearted June**

**Annie and Madelene**

**Anything you can do, you can do better.**

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**DON'T KEEP US A SECRET. PLEASE FORWARD THIS E-NEWSLETTER TO FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES WHO YOU THINK COULD BENEFIT FROM SOME ALEXANDER INPUT OR WHO MIGHT LIKE TO BE INVOLVED WITH BACK CARE QUEST.**