

## ALEXANDER NEWSLETTER MARCH 2004

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE READY TO TAKE THE SHORT CUT TO PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL COMFORT.**

The Alexander Newsletter is distributed to around 450 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. ANTHONY ROBBINS ROCKS!

Suppose you had something really valuable to communicate, but by some strange quirk of fate you found yourself doing so in one of the Finno-Ugric languages. Except for when good fortune placed someone from Hungary, Estonia, Finland or *some* northern areas of Russia in your path, your enthusiasm and passion would meet with baffled incomprehension.

It's a little like that when teachers graduate from an Alexander Training School; they can discourse animatedly, and at length, on head-neck-back relationships, directions, inhibition and seemingly esoteric topics. But they do this in a land where the language most spoken is What's-it-going-to-do-for-me. AT teachers then spend the next little while doing SATS, GCSE, A/S Level and beyond in the language of the land. They acquire fluency but like native speakers of Finno-Ugric languages, they feel a rush of excitement when they find someone who can speak *their* language.

So it was that our hearts gave a little flutter when we read Anthony Robbins' observations: 'Emotion is created by motion....Your body leads your emotions.' We were childishly thrilled to note that Anthony Robbins, no less, author of 'Awaken the Giant Within', and peak performance consultant to any number of international companies and sports teams, is belting out some of our best Alexander hymns! It almost led us to shed our fabled Alexander calm; momentarily at least.

In 'Awaken the Giant Within, Robbins notes: 'Once you learn how to use your body when in certain emotional states, you can return to those states, or avoid them, simply by changing your physiology. *The challenge is that most of us limit ourselves to just a few habitual patterns of physiology.* We assume them automatically, not realizing how great a role they play in shaping our behaviour from moment to moment.'

As Alexander teachers, we work to help people break out of their habitual patterns of physiology. Pain, whether emotional or physical, reduces our choices, limits the patterns available to us, and obscures our horizons, to the point where we envisage the future as little more than the realisation of our worst case scenario. The habit of managing pain narrows our vision and undermines our natural optimism. The Alexander Technique is a simple, safe tool that enables people to expand their physiology, or movement, and create emotions that serve them better, by accessing their inner joy.

Where do you want your body to lead you?

#### 2. A MOVING STORY

A rich man was moving to a new house three blocks away from his old one. Being rich, he hired a removal company.

He soon noticed the movers were not treating his prized possessions as carefully as he would like. He grew very concerned about what would happen to a tall grandfather clock, which he had inherited from his grandmother.

So, taking the clock in his arms, he started for the new house. But the clock was as tall as its

owner, and heavy besides. He had to put it down every few feet and rest his arms and mop his streaming brow. Then he would clutch his burden and stagger on again. After half an hour of these strenuous exertions he was nearing his destination, when a drunk who had been watching his labours from the opposite side of the road called out to him.

"Mister," he said thickly, "could I ask you a question?"

"What is it?" demanded the rich man.

"Why on earth don't you carry a watch?"

So it was a misapprehension. But isn't that exactly what it is when we carry round a burden of physical or mental pain because we wrongly assume that it will be harder to jettison it than it is to lug it around with us?

### 3. HOW TO 'LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE OF LIFE'

The Alexander Technique is a subtle but powerful tool that enables people to make ongoing qualitative changes in their lifestyle.

In our professional role, as brokers of change, we think that that is pretty cool. Ok, in our personal lives we have been known to wobble *occasionally*. Being Alexander teachers doesn't mean that we ever expect to achieve perfection; it's just about having the patience and humility to stay the course. But we do believe passionately in the value of change, and once again, we feel that Anthony Robbins speak for us on the subject of change.

'Why is it that most people think change takes so long?' Robbins asks. 'One reason, obviously, is that most people have tried again and again through will-power to make changes, and failed. The assumption that they then make is that important changes must take a long time and be very difficult to make. In reality, it's only difficult because most of us don't know how to change! We don't have an effective strategy....'

'Most people in our society have unconsciously linked a lot of pain to the idea of being able to change quickly. On one hand, we desire to change quickly, and on the other, our cultural programming teaches us that to change quickly means that maybe we never even had a problem at all. Maybe we were just faking it or being lazy.'

The effective strategy he envisages is, in essence, the same one that F.M. Alexander discovered 100 years earlier. You have to interrupt the habitual pattern, before you can create the possibility of change. This is why will-power alone will not work. Both Robbins and Alexander agree that we have to '*condition our nervous systems to succeed, not just once, but consistently.*' Unless we do that will-power alone will be no more effective than banging our head against a brick wall.

When it comes to brass tacks the two diverge somewhat. Robbins suggests that you leverage the pain that the undesirable habitual pattern will cause you. He suggests that when you find you have lapsed into a harmful habitual pattern, you either shove your finger up your nose, or bellow out the words of some especially naff tune, such as 'Always look on the bright side of life', forthwith. Irrespective of where you may be.

Now we are belt and braces gals, and we strongly believe that two deterrents have to be better than one. And so it was that Annie came to discuss this with a coaching client, regarding the client's negative thought patterns. Not 24 hours later, Annie was luxuriating in a foam bath when an old pattern of negative thought crept in. Integrity being what it is, the mere thought of having to stick a wet finger up her nose was enough to change her thinking, in record time.

Dear reader, it only works, it is a deterrent more powerful than being catapulted into the jungle with Jordan and Peter Andre!!! It can also be applied to our grosser habits of movement.

You know the expression 'belly up to the bar'. Many people belly up to the counter, or the kitchen sink or any surface with which their abdomen can make contact; or they lean against walls, bars, or any surface that will offer some support, without thought for the way they misalign their spine. Once you have caught yourself in the act a couple of times, and rammed your finger up your nose while singing loudly, we guarantee that you will be far more chary of these harmful patterns.

As regards the effective strategy for replacing them, how about the thought of your whole body being supported by two seriously large feet, and both feet being supported by the floor? It's better for your back, it will allow you to lengthen right through your torso (so you can suddenly find yourself looking 5+ lbs thinner) and it will preserve your 'street cred'.

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

**Madelene will be running an Alexander Technique Introductory class on Saturday April 3 2004 from 3pm until 6pm at Shine Holistic, 52 Stoke Newington Church Street, N16. Call 07939 347099 or Shine on 7241 5033 for more information.**

**Clear your mental clutter now, including free introductory one-to-one session.**

**Annie's two hour workshop on how to make mental space for the things you want more of in your life on April 3 2004 from 10.30-2.30 at Pearl of the Orient, 33 Warley Hill, Brentwood, Essex. Cost £35 including free introductory one to one session. Call 07712 924124 for details.**

**Have a great March**

**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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