

NEWSLETTER MAY 2003

THIS LETTER IS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE READY TO STOP REPEATING THE SAME OLD THING AND TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

1. SIXTY SECOND TIP : GETTING ON AND OFF YOUR BED

Getting in and out of bed has all sorts of emotional connotations about weariness and sleep (in) and facing another day (out); whereas 'on and off' suggests the most advantageous way to perform the task mechanically. In England beds are usually quite low and strategies limited to 'the great drop' (in) and the reluctant wrench (out), with no more thought given than joints and discs demand.

A different way to do it, always assuming you don't sleep in a towering four-poster, is to go up to the bed facing forward and then just take first one knee onto it and then the other. You can then swing your bottom round so you're sitting on the bed and go on from there. To get up, come up to kneeling near the edge of the bed, then 'walk' first one leg and then the other onto the floor. You can do this either facing towards the floor, or across the bed. Reversing to standing may be slightly easier if you have tight hips. You can do this and keep a respectably erect spine. Caution: Don't try this one, if you sleep in bunk beds.

2 .BODY LITERACY

Honesty compels us to admit that sometimes Alexander teachers also are hoist by their own petard, albeit with a free neck and relaxed demeanour. Sometimes we too have been guilty of repeating the same old things about the Alexander Technique and getting the same old result. On occasion, we have repeated the same old AT things and either

- a) met with a degree of incomprehension;
- b) left our pupils unable to describe the experience and value of their lessons succinctly.

Recently, we arrived at the analogy of literacy. Without it, large areas of experience and knowledge are closed off to us – so much so that we don't even know they exist. At most, we might be dimly aware that we are missing out on something big. In a lot of cases it might mean being unable to see the connection between causes and effects. Chances are, we might develop other areas of perception to a higher degree, but there would be major blind spots.

Crudely put, Alexander stated that, in the modern world, we are utterly unaware of the possible connections between the way we treat our body and the long-term consequences. The adage: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it' could possibly do with a little expansion. 'If it ain't broke, don't expect it to stay that way indefinitely, if you don't take care of it', also has merit.

If your body is working reasonably, you assume that you 'must be doing something right', as the saying goes; *but you don't know what*. When it starts to seize up, the only cause that you can identify may be the last thing you remember doing, or the last twinge, before the malfunctioning. Because you can't trace the effects back to causes, you're in the dark; you're left anxious and dependent on the professionals.

Literacy illuminates and empowers. The Alexander technique, or body literacy, enables you to read physical causes and alter physical - and mental - effects. We wouldn't end up with the physical troubles we have, if we all came into the world complete with a nice, clear manual, tucked neatly behind one tiny, shell-like ear. But we don't; we have to learn body literacy. Is this so bad? Maybe not. Pupils tell us that learning this skill provides more rewards than they ever anticipated.

2. THE WIDOW'S STORY

"I was married three times" explained the little old lady, "and I'll never marry again."

"Wow, three divorces. That must have been tough."

"No, I've never been divorced. I'm a widow. My first two husbands died of eating poison mushrooms, and my third husband died of a fractured skull."

"That's a shame", said her friend, "How did it happen?"
"He wouldn't eat the mushrooms."

Was the little old lady working on the principle: 'If at first you don't succeed, try something different'? Could a little Alexander thinking have produced a preferable outcome? F.M. Alexander advocated keeping your mind focused on the 'means whereby', i.e. the way you do something. This works better than 'tunnel vision' pursuit of an end, because it broadens your horizons and creates a range of options. (It may also safeguard male longevity.)

N.B. In an attempt to avoid further run ins with the P.C. Police, Madelene and Annie have stripped this story of potentially offensive, stereotypical masculine aggression, by making it 'the *widow's* story'. Were the poisoned mushroom in a callused, male hand, we could be in trouble again....

3. MADELENE AND ANNIE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF OUR WEBSITE www.nopain-gain.com

One of the lesser known reasons why people train as Alexander teachers is because they *know* they will be reborn as supremely serene beings, unruffled by the vicissitudes of fortune. And so it was with Madelene and Annie. We emerged from our Alexander training, able to take life blithely on the chin, to smile gently in the face of adversity, to face with equanimity even the trauma of a broken nail. (Well, we reckon we were close....ish.)

However, nothing prepared us for the trauma of giving birth to a website and that without anaesthesia, pre-natal classes or anything else. We did have a great midwife in Rob Dubery, who has guided us with unflinching patience along each step of the way. Rob is a natural AT person, with a gift for inhibiting a knee-jerk reaction to a stimulus – we know; our endless queries, emails and indecision provided a never ending stream of stimuli.

We'd like to thank all our pupils who contributed either by a testimonial or by sharing their AT experiences with us; or even by listening to our serenely stressed mutterings during the gestation period. We hope you will visit our website, tell your friends about it and tell us what you think, so we can keep improving it.

4. FORTHCOMING EVENTS

5.

Saturday May 3, 10.a.m.-12.00p.m., Annie will be doing a free Introductory Alexander Technique workshop at Hampstead Medical Practice, 91 Heath St, London NW3. For more details phone: 0845 6442341

Have a great May

Annie and Madelene

Anything you can do, you can do better.

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