

# TAKING THE TRYING OUT OF BEING

Annie Kaszina and Madelene Webb's Alexander Newsletter April 2004

**THIS NEWSLETTER IS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE READY TO STOP TRYING AND LET SOMETHING DIFFERENT INTO THEIR LIVES.**

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

'Once again, I have enjoyed reading your newsletter, so don't be surprised if you see me sticking my finger up my nose! Writing it, it sounds rather rude, but I always feel inspired by your writing. Thanks again.' Natalie (Belsize Health)

[Editors' note for our new readers: no, the Alexander Technique is emphatically not about antisocial and unhygienic practices. Natalie's comments refer to a very powerful tool for breaking old bad habits discussed in our March 2004 newsletter.)

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## 1. TAKING THE TRYING OUT OF BEING

Well, spring is upon us, happily, and what better moment to embrace change?

One change that we are introducing this month is re-branding our newsletter. In a recent brainstorming session, Madelene and Annie agreed that, ultimately, for us, the Alexander Technique is about 'taking the trying out of being'; that is the concept that underpins all that we write. It is also the thought that colours the way we work with our pupils.

Our role, or our business, is to teach people how they can acquire natural poise, shed stress and become pain-free. Our underlying thinking is about freeing up all the resources and energies that generally break, like waves, over the rocks of trying.

Robert the Bruce, the kilted, indomitable arachnophile, is alleged to have said: 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try and try again'- by which he, doubtless meant, 'don't throw in the towel'. We accept that we may be taking Alexander licence with the doughty Scot's actual words, although not, we hope, his implication. But we feel justified in a little, well intentioned linguistic tinkering, because, as it stands, that is a truly pernicious statement.

Had he said: 'If at first you don't succeed, don't throw in the towel (or the caber, or the kilt, for that matter), but do something different', we would have been Robert the Bruce groupies. 'Try, try and try again' simply condemns people to repeating the same thing, while hoping for different results. Logic suggests that exploring different options, with the same end in mind, would be more likely to produce the desired result.

The fear has to be that we will slip into unproductive inertia; that we will just sit and quiver, like lightly set jellies marooned on a platter.

But it doesn't stop there. Our trying doesn't apply just to our doing, it impacts on our very being. Picture yourself, for a moment, as a stick of Brighton rock (or Blackpool, or Bornemouth, it matters not); whatever you do, or try to do, is imprinted throughout the whole of you - throughout, in other words, your being. We may be creatures who seek to compartmentalise, but we do ourselves a disservice. We are not compartmentalised; in reality, we are all of a piece.

So what happens when we stop trying, when we defy the whole work ethic? The fear has to be that we will slip into unproductive inertia; that we will just sit and quiver, like lightly set jellies marooned on a platter.

If trying was our only option, that might happen; but it isn't. Eliminating trying frees us up to think creatively, to explore previously unsuspected options and to approach the circumstances with a degree of care, particularly self-care, that trying almost inevitably precludes.

## 2. MUSINGS ON SELF-CARE

It's a funny thing about self-care; it's one of those phrases that seem to make people squirm. It doesn't sound that good and certainly the concept doesn't sit well with most people - possibly because of the work ethic.

Somehow it seems to carry some kind of stigma. If challenged, people will say: 'Well, I'm too busy', or, 'I have to put other people first', or 'I just don't have the time'. You will, won't you?

Caring for yourself last seems to pass for a merit in our society. Even people who are downright selfish (not that we personally know any, and you probably don't either) don't actually show a great deal of self-care; they just show remarkably little care towards others - or at least so we have been told.

Blessed is the exception who probes the rule. Between us, we have one pupil who personifies self-care. He is an extremely high-powered executive in a demanding, stressful position, right at the top of the corporate ladder. Yet he is also someone who has mapped out a comprehensive strategy of physical and personal self-care, and he sticks to it.

The result? He is able to accomplish an enormous amount in his day, without losing sight of his own needs. And because he is in touch with himself, he is in touch with others also. He can extend the same care that he shows to himself, throughout his life.

He works from the centre out; whereas most of us work desperately around the diameter of the circle, like hamsters on a treadmill, without ever having the reserves of energy to address the centre.

Is A. more energetic and talented than most people are? Probably, but that doesn't invalidate the principle. When you nurture yourself conscientiously, you have more resources to bring to bear on every area of your life. We are delighted that we can say that since A. has been having Alexander lessons, he reports that his work and stress loads have become increasingly manageable.

## 3. WHAT MAKES A GOOD DOCTOR?

A doctor needs three things to be successful

1. To have grey hair, so as to look distinguished;
2. To be moderately overweight, so as to look prosperous;
3. To have painful haemorrhoids, so as to have a constant look of grave concern.

Of course, he could just feel genuine concern for his patients.... But how many doctors do you know who truly care for themselves first?

#### **4. WHAT WE'VE BEEN UP TO THIS MONTH**

It's been an inspirational month for both Madelene and Annie. Our two intrepid Alexander teachers came within a hair's breadth of committing to a trek through the Sinai desert. On close consideration, however, the trip isn't practicable at present.

Madelene, the adventurous one, shrugged off the thought of desert hardships, while Annie, the homebody, was overcome with relief at not having to break the news to her mother - that thought was worrying her even more than Bedouin camps and Irritable Camel Syndrome.

Meanwhile, Madelene has been doing a sailing course, with perfect poise, while Annie has gamely ventured into the uncharted territory of Welwyn Garden City to undertake an NLP Practitioner course.

Sharon, Annie's dog and guru, not wanting to be left behind in all this ongoing personal and professional development, has struck out on her own and formed a close friendship with a highly articulate teddy bear, aptly named Ted. We're told that Ted has written about his feelings and included a rather fetching photo of the lovely Sharon Shih Tsu in an online magazine.

Once again Sharon has shown herself to be a role model. She has refused to be constrained by geographical or other boundaries and effortlessly reinvented herself. No wonder Annie says: 'much of what I need to know I've learned from my dog.'

Have a great April,

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 ALEXANDER INPUT.**

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