

The Power of Posture

Hilary Foxwell

Hilary is a teacher with a difference – she trains people who have a wide range of interests to become more effective in going about their daily tasks. The natural posture we usually experience in early childhood can be regained by using the Alexander Technique. As we change the unconscious reactions and movement patterns,



functioning of body and mind improves, often in profound ways. The habits of a lifetime may pull us out of shape but with gentle hands-on work and the specific mental instructions the Alexander student learns to stop, think and not ‘do’ the action in the old ways.

Both teacher and students use the 5 ALEXANDER PRINCIPLES to think in a specific way: - ‘INHIBITION’ (the first principle) is a term used by Alexander (before Freud) to intercept or prevent old habits of collapse or effort – a moment to pause, and not over-react to a situation. Trying to get the ‘right’ posture will only create more tensions, since changes need to become as fluid and easy as a child in motion. You can change how you look, feel, move and perform – for a better quality of life.

The other Four Principles are applied to the whole body, in sequence. We only ‘think’ the new instructions to allow the natural reflexes to work for us; this becomes easier with practice and experience.



NECK:

Release the neck. When the neck is pulled forwards the muscles are shortened to raise the head. This contraction affects the whole body and spine.



HEAD:

Forward and up. By encouraging the head to balance freely it becomes weightless. Usually a forward ‘roll’ allows it to sit effortlessly on the top of the vertebra.

BACK:



Lengthen and widen. The spine can lengthen if the head is poised freely. Muscle tone improves when ‘thinking’ to allow the whole back to widen from shoulders to hip joints, and increases our breathing capacity.

KNEES:



Forwards and away. This encourages a lengthening of muscle patterns whilst sitting. It also prevents pushing the knee joints whilst standing; and helps to keep us more grounded.

The power of posture can have a far



greater effect on our body and mind than we may ever realise. Learning the Alexander Technique is a fascinating journey of self discovery; it can prevent many of the effects of ageing and improve our health and wellbeing.

It is a really valuable tool for enhancing music, dance, drama and horse riding as well as many sports activities where over-effort frequently impedes movement. The Alexander Technique is primarily re-educational, and the student learns how to increase his/her awareness in daily activities.

I have nearly 25 years experience since training as an Alexander teacher (1981 – 1984), so I have developed ways of understanding the Alexander principles at much deeper levels.

It is often a revelation when a student discovers how thinking affects muscle tone and I enjoy being creative and intuitive with their individual needs – everyday can require something different too. Many adults come to me because of back, neck or shoulder pains. Learning the technique can also help younger people to maintain their natural posture, prevent future health problems and increase their confidence or emotional stability.

The hands-on instruction is always important, as it can change muscle patterns at a deeper level. As teachers we direct our hands in very specific ways, so that the student body begins to recognise his/her original ‘blueprint’ through the clarity in our own body use. It is amazing to feel how the neck, head and spine re-coordinate, and the student often looks and feels very different too.

A truly holistic approach is provided in my practice, I show clients how they can empower themselves to change their health, wellbeing and life experiences in many more ways than previously they thought possible.

Hilary also offers Bowen Technique or Healing to help the Alexander student make further changes if required. Teaching the Alexander ‘thinking’ in Tai Chi and Chi Gong makes a big difference to the group or individual sessions.

FM Alexander (1869-1955) developed the technique as an actor and recitor in Australia. His experiences of hoarseness and loss of voice, where no remedy could be found, led him to discover that our Western approach to everyday life starts to affect our natural movements from around 4-5 years old, mainly through sitting on chairs.

Most indigenous cultures will be seen to maintain their innate reflex support right through to the wisdom years. By preventing his habit to ‘try harder’ and instructing co-ordination of his neck, head and spine, Alexander’s voice improved dramatically and also his whole health.



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Hilary uses a variety of tools to help you understand the Alexander principle on a deeper level

Doctors were sending their patients to him where they could find no cause of illness and Alexander set up a practise in London in 1904.

Conditioning affects body use.

We are also influenced by our conditioning – this can include copying our peers, clothing and fashions, long periods of incapacity (e.g. computers, TV, driving) tiredness, stress, repetitive actions, emotions and physical habit. Alexander wanted to bring the technique into schools where many problems start; particularly with the focus on high achievement nowadays, this could make a real difference in later life to everyone’s health.

Semi Surpine

An effective daily practice to release mental



and physical tensions. Lie on a carpeted floor with books to support your head and the knees bent for 20 minutes to encourage improved coordination.

Hilary teaches individuals in Tenbury Wells and Ludlow. She is also available for study group sessions (max. 6) talks and workshops in your area.

Please contact Hilary for further information on 01584 819010. A free 15 minute telephone consultation is available if you wish to discuss any specific needs or write to Hilary Foxwell, The Bright Times, PO BOX 723, Worcester, WR7 4WD.

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