

ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE (AT)

Website: <http://www.alexandertechnique.com/>

Frederick Matthias Alexander (or F. M. Alexander) developed the *Alexander Technique* to help the body to function more efficiently due to his own medical problems. As an actor who developed chronic laryngitis resulting from his performances he was determined to find a way to heal himself. Eventually he discovered that his problem resulted from excess muscle tension and he realized that if neck tension is reduced then the head no longer presses down on the spine so it is free to lengthen.

The process of how we acquire new movements, constantly adapting and changing from our basic, primary motion can cause health problems. As we grow and continually apply these changes we grow numb to how they differ from our natural motions. Alexander called this principle the Debauchery of the Senses but scientists today label it sensory adaptation. The relationship between the neck and head was the Primary Control and the focal point of his work.

The Alexander Technique applies this principle to improve the freedom of movement for the entire body by reeducation in new ways to sit, lie down, stand and other daily functions. By teaching the proper amount of energy for an activity the body retains more energy while maintaining greater balance and coordination. The technique is about unlearning the tension the body has accumulated throughout its lifetime and the resulting muscle tension that produce abnormal mannerisms and motions.

The technique is often taught to improve performance in the arts such as music, acting, dance and even in some sports training. The Julliard School of Performing Arts, the Royal College of Music and the Royal College of Dramatic Art in London are just a few of the institutions teaching this technique. It's also used as therapy to aid the recovery of balance and motion, and for speech training to repair the voice. It's even been used to unlearn repetitive stress and to aid those patients dealing with reduced mobility such as those with Parkinson's disease. People of all ages have used the Alexander Technique to improve the quality of their lives for over a century.

Teachers certified by professional societies are often required to complete a 3-year program consisting of more than 1,500 hours of training. Some teachers are trained by an informal, apprentice process. Membership in professional organizations is a matter of personal choice so it is best to learn about any potential Alexander Technique teacher's training prior to beginning any therapy.

USER COMMENTS: (by permission from website): *"The Alexander Technique helped a long-standing back problem and to get a good night's sleep after many years of tossing and turning."*
- Paul Newman, actor

"Alexander established not only the beginnings of a far reaching science of the apparently involuntary movements we call reflexes, but a technique of correction and self-control which forms a substantial addition to our very slender resources in personal education." - George Bernard Shaw, playwright.

"I find the Alexander Technique very helpful in my work. Things happen without you trying. They get to be light and relaxed. You must get an Alexander teacher to show it to you." - John Cleese, comedian and actor.

"Mr. Alexander's method lays hold of the individual as a whole, as a self-vitalizing agent. He reconditions and re-educates the reflex mechanisms and brings their habits into normal relation with the functioning of the organism as a whole. I regard this method as thoroughly scientific and educationally sound." - Professor George E. Coghill, Nobel Prize winning anatomist and physiologist.