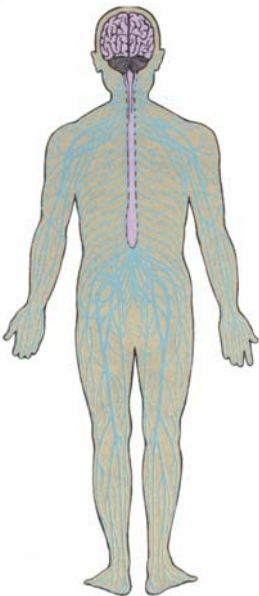


Severe Head Injury and The Alexander Technique

By Tasha Miller and David Langstroth

It is often said that the mind and the body are parts of one complete unity. This is particularly highlighted in cases of severe head injury which can produce both physical and psychological problems ranging from loss of balance and control to changes in personality. Yet, most therapeutic approaches address only the body as a physical structure, or only the mind as a disembodied entity.

The Alexander Technique is unique in addressing the whole human being as a unit. It concerns itself with how we translate intentions into practice by focusing on how we control our co-ordination in everyday life. Most people never think twice about control and co-ordination for they rely on skills which are acquired early in life unconsciously and automatically. But if this control is disturbed through injury automatic skills are no longer reliable. It becomes imperative to consciously learn the principles of co-ordination. The Alexander Technique is a method for developing that co-ordination.



The Nervous System: where mind and body meet

Learning the Alexander Technique may not repair damage to the nervous system, but it will enable you to use more fully the potential that remains, a potential that is usually unexploited and uncoordinated. As is seen in the recoveries that are made by stroke victims, it is often possible, after injuries have been sustained, to learn to control and co-ordinate the self using new neural pathways.

The Alexander Technique was developed by an Australian actor who was faced with vocal problems that threatened his career. Over years of patient experimentation, he discovered the pattern of co-ordination which is fundamental for control, health and efficiency in all human activities. He discovered that this pattern was distorted to some extent in most people, and that this distortion was responsible for a wide variety of health and personality problems. His technique for restoring this co-ordination involves training the conscious thinking mind to understand and project the proper pattern of co-ordination which eventually establishes itself as a new habit.

Alexander's pattern of co-ordination consists of a certain dynamic relationship being maintained between the head and the rest of the body, that is, the spine, torso and limbs. The head's movements in relationship to the rest of the body via the spine torso and limbs is known as the primary control, for it co-

ordinates all movement and activity and also provides a basis for reliable kinaesthetic feedback, both of which are important for mental health and stability.

The Alexander Technique is a skill and not a therapy, and therefore it is taught through lessons, not treatments. These lessons are given on a one to one basis, as each person is unique and requires individual attention. It is best to take a long term approach to the work as it is a skill which is unfamiliar to most people, and habits take time to overcome. For more information contact Alexander Technique Atlantic (902) 346-2065 www.AlexanderTechniqueAtlantic.ca