

## **The Alexander Technique the iPAC way, the Importance of Posture**

By Tasha Miller and David Langstroth

Posture is not a very fashionable idea anymore. It makes us think of prim Victorian spinsters all laced up, or we remember being told to stand up straight by parents or teachers. For most of us the effort was not worth it; we could hardly be expected to go around all day with a book on our head or with the stiffness of a soldier at attention.

And so we let it all go. We slouch, we relax, and we go through life with a poor habitual posture that is not merely unattractive, but is the root cause of persistent back problems, aching muscles, sore joints and mal-coordination. It puts harmful pressures on our internal organs, undermines our confidence and affects our success in the world.

But here's something you probably didn't know: to move with good posture actually takes much less effort than to move with poor posture. The lightness and ease of many young children is a good testament to this fact. If our efforts in the past to "stand up straight" were such a failure it is only because we didn't know how to do it; we didn't understand the subtle mechanics of the body or how to adjust them. We simply braced a lot of muscles and held them there.

The Alexander Technique the iPAC way is a practical method for changing these habits. It is successful because rather than making us stiffen up a lot of extra muscles it encourages us to become aware of what we are already doing. Beginning with the relationship of the head to the spine and moving on to the rest of the structure we learn how to undo the habits we have developed. By gradually removing wrong habits we can allow the natural reflexes to do their job and keep us effortlessly upright.

### **How is it taught?**

Everyone's habits are different, and most people are not aware of the things they do that interfere with their natural postural reflexes. For this reason individual attention is essential. Private lessons last for about an hour and involve verbal instruction together with gentle hands-on guidance in simple activities such as standing, sitting, rising from a chair, or lying on a table. Workshops in groups are also very useful at the introductory level, to find out what the work is all about and whether you want to go into it more deeply. The Alexander Technique has been taught for over 100 years and teachers are trained either through registered training courses or through long term apprenticeships.

### **How is it different from the other things I do?**

There is nothing mystical about the Alexander Technique the iPAC way. It works through standard principles of physiology. Yet, it involves ideas about how we function and how we change that may be new to some people. As we learn to apply these new ideas in practice we come to understand why earlier efforts to change may have been unsuccessful.

One of these ideas is that our sense of feeling is unreliable. This can be demonstrated in lessons and it has profound implications. It means that we need to rely upon something other than sensory feedback to make changes in the way we do things. In this work we rely on conscious reasoning.

Another very important idea that is unique to this work is that we can control the moment by moment co-ordination of hundreds of muscles and parts without having to control each one directly. Students learn to maintain a pattern which ensures good co-ordination, and good posture is the result.

Students are also pleased to learn that there are no exercises. Change occurs by doing something different, not by repeating the same thing again and again. Thoughtfulness and attention are cultivated rather than routines and obligations.

Finally, the Alexander Technique the iPAC way is a process of re-education and not a therapy. It is something that you learn to do in managing life rather than something which is done to you. The principle is one of prevention rather than cure.

### **The big picture**

Good posture is fundamental to health and well being. The Technique enables us to reclaim those healthy conditions but it does more than change us; it gives us the tool to change ourselves. And it is ultimately about more than posture: it gives us freedom from the domination of our own habits. Once we gain that, anything is possible.

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