

THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE: how to get a life

By Trixi Field

When I started the technique I suppose I had the same misunderstandings as anybody else: a new therapeutic way to get good posture, stay slim, learn breath control and all the other myths associated with it. How wrong I was.

I wanted something in my life to change, I knew that. It just wasn't what I thought it was. I didn't want to rock my little paddling boat. I was proud of my teeny frame, my balletic 'poise', however destructive. I certainly didn't want to expand!

Yet what I was presented with was inhibition, (I thought I had enough inhibitions of my own!) and the beginning of... a whole new beginning. It is difficult to express adequately what the Alexander Technique has given me, but I will list a few.

The first change occurred in the first five months. It wasn't sudden. It came at a time when I wondered why on earth I was doing Alexander at all - nothing spectacular seemed to be happening. In fact, it was a gradual realisation that something was missing, and that something was the regular, monthly headache that I had suffered since my student days. I may have had one or two since I started the technique (1988), but I think I can probably count them on one hand, with reasonable confidence!

I also learnt to have a bit of a sense of humour, particularly when deeper, more uncomfortable changes began. I suppose I could say that Alexander helped me to take myself seriously without taking myself seriously. The creaks, groans, the self doubt, the unease, the appearance of deep-seated and almost forgotten emotional baggage, the undiagnosable, seemingly untreatable, plopping-in-and-out-of-gut feelings are probably best endured with a sense of humour. They do pass eventually, and as one realises one isn't going to die of them, they do get steadily more endurable.

Life has very definitely changed for the better. I have learnt how to stop. Certainly I don't always stop when it would be better to do so, but I stop more than I used to. I'm getting better at thinking about my head before I lurch into some action or activity I might well regret. Many things have become effortless. Not all. (Stopping does still take some doing!) I have so much more to learn. But many have. And many dreams that I harboured years and years ago and more or less gave up on are beginning to come true for me. It's as though the opportunities are coming to find me now that I'm interfering less with life and letting life unfold for me in the way it is meant to. And that's so exciting, practising stopping is extra important for me at the moment!

I believe that there is no end to what we can aspire to if we stop hankering after the summit and enjoy what the mountain path itself has to offer. After all, if we take our time, attend to our every step and allow the path to take us to the summit, we'll get there anyway, peacefully and happily. And weren't the flowers, the birds, the fresh air and our travelling companions along the way worth slowing down for? This little essay is an expression of my thanks to Tasha for patiently teaching me the technique for nine years. I know it's still not enough - it needs to be a lifelong commitment to oneself. But so far it has definitely been worth it and I would encourage all her students to look upon it as long term. My good wishes to all of you, for your happiness and well being.