

## The Alexander Technique: A Brief Overview by Lisa Galbraith

The Alexander Technique is a process of *kinesthetic re-education*, integrating our mind and body so that our thinking and movement become *one* activity. This brings about an innate lightness, ease, and grace of mind and body and an economy of movement and effort.

The Alexander Technique is over 100 years old and is taught at performing arts centers including the Juilliard School, American Conservatory Theatre (ACT), London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, and many universities and colleges around the world. Doctors, chiropractors, physical therapists, and other therapists may refer their patients to an Alexander Technique teacher for neuro-muscular-skeletal re-education, i.e. the Mayo Clinic, John Hopkins, and Craig Bowon, MD and internist in the Twin Cities.

Well-known figures in a variety of fields have studied the technique: George Bernard Shaw, John Dewey, Aldous Huxley, Paul Newman, Kevin Kline, William Hurt, Nikolaas Tinbergen, winner of a Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine, and Sally Swift, riding instructor and author of *Centered Riding*.

The Alexander Technique re-educates mind and body *simultaneously* while we are engaged in any activity. This re-education is facilitated with the Alexander Technique teacher's gentle hands-on instructions and three key components:

- ◆ **Awareness** - becoming aware of unconscious habits that may cause unnecessary tension, stress, and injury.
- ◆ **Positive inhibition** - learning to stop giving consent to habitual responses. This allows the innate or natural integrity to function and new constructive choices to be made.
- ◆ **Constructive thinking and direction** - using Alexander's *conscious directions* while we are engaged in any activity: walking, sitting, standing, driving a car, working at a computer, sports, singing, riding, cooking, speaking, performing, and more.

F. M. Alexander, the founder of the Alexander Technique, called this process *means whereby*, in which one uses one's innate kinesthetic integrity to achieve any goal. In our society we find another process more prevalent, which Alexander called *endgaining*, where the end is more important than the integrity of the means. By engaging in endgaining, we often misuse our innate integrity, which can bring about discomfort and "dis-ease."

The Alexander Technique allows us to be *cause* in our lives, rather than the effect of our unconscious choices. It can enhance all we do and help us create a better quality of life. Through the Alexander Technique we learn to live more fully and consciously in each moment with a greater ability to respond to the diverse stimuli of life.

Lisa Galbraith is a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique and a teaching member of the American Society of the Alexander Technique (AmSAT). She completed the three-year teacher training at the San Francisco Alexander Training Institute, graduating in 1988, and has been teaching the Alexander Technique for over twenty-four years. She had a private teaching practice in the San Francisco Bay Area for twelve years, and has taught in Alabama, Florida, and has been teaching in the Minneapolis area since 2005. Lisa also has over twenty years experience in teaching a variety of movement arts, a background in dance and musical performance, and competitive sports.

For more information, please contact Lisa at 952-476-0341.

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