



Alexander
Technique
International



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Letter from the Editor

BY JULIE MULVIHILL



Dear ATI Membership!

I was unable to attend the conference last October and because that was an early reality for me, I recognized a unique position for the ExChange to publish Keynotes speeches from conferences as a way of seeing both our changes over time as well as the consistency of what we value and appreciate as members. What a treat to read over and through the years of perspectives, goals, hopes and dreams of and for ATI! Further, how cool that we can watch ourselves grow and change, self actualize, as an organization through these speeches. So, in addition to outstanding new articles to learn from this issue, I have collected a triptych of Keynotes: Rosa Luisa Rossi's from 2010 in Spain, Tommy Thompson's from the thirtieth birthday virtual conference in 2022, and Robyn Avalon's from 2025 Philadelphia PA, USA.

Additionally for this issue, we are re-publishing Ron Dennis's great article from Dec 2025 as there were some issues with it the first go around. These problems were corrected quickly on the web version of the ExChange, but I want to draw attention to his outstanding work in the ways that he intended for all of us. All authors always retain their own copyright when publishing in the ExChange.

There are two follow-on articles from Rosslyn McLeod and David Owen—you can certainly pick up these articles as a first read each or you could look back to the Dec 2025 issue as well as the May 2025 issue to get the full scope from these two authors. Rosslyn writes about F.M. Alexander's history in Australia and New Zealand; David writes about the integration of AT with Neurolinguistic Programming™. The arch is compelling and where you dive in is always a good place to start!

We also have an article with a practical insight for teaching from frequent contributor Joseph Weissenberg, a reflection of training with David Gorman from new author to the ExChange, Carolyn Simon, and new poetry contributor, George Shindler. All are inspiring and representative of the diversity of our group and the ways in which we practice, teach, and choose.

For the third year running, The ExChange is featuring an interview for the May 2026 issue! I am excited that we have the continuity of creating a dialogue and highlighting the work of our teachers for three seasons now. Not only do interviews showcase or introduce a teacher, but they also invite the curiosity and research interests of the special authors (and teachers in their own right) who are conducting the interviews. This May, AT teacher, Reflexologist, and Reiki Healer, Judit Pasztor had a conversation with Delia Rosenboom specifically about trauma and AT. I hope that you will find their conversation inspiring, as this is a topic of recent significance within the ATI community.

I hope that the sharing that happens through the ExChange is as nurturing to you as it is for me. If you have ideas and are looking for ways to express them for the ExChange, I would love to work with you. Specifically for folks wanting to write but without an idea, if you are interested in interviewing a seasoned teacher, or wanting to review a book, I would love to help facilitate that for you! As always it is an honor and point of pride for me to invite you into ATI, AT, and the worlds of our work via the ExChange.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie A. Mulvihill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Mulvihill

ATI ExChange Editor,

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A New Direction for ATI: AGM Keynote Address Spain – October 2010

BY ROSA LUISA ROSSI



Good evening everybody – Dear colleagues and friends of the Alexander Technique-



It is September 16th, just last month, I am sitting on the top of Gornergrat, in front of me the world famous Matterhorn, surrounded by a mountain range of over 29 mountains with an altitude of over 4000 m – more than 13500 feet – I experience the profound beauty of the nature around me.

In the beginning I observed the Matterhorn, like some giant being, who was hiding behind the heavy clouds. But then they became softer, some of them disappeared and it began showing up, standing alone, in its magnificent beauty... a few moments later being covered again by the ever changing forms of new clouds.

Why have I come here? I came for inspiration. I came to find a meaning and the words, which would allow me to share with all of you now, at this ATI AGM, in this lovely retreat center called “Residencia Sagrados Corazones,” which means “The Residence of the Sacred Hearts.” We are close to Madrid in Spain and it is October 2010. I came to find the inspiration for **A New Direction for ATI.**

I am sitting on a small table, looking at ATI’s website and reading what Jennifer Mizenko, ATI’s chair at this moment, had written to the members:

This AGM is moving in A NEW DIRECTION – it will be filled with:

***** Exploration – Play – Camaraderie – and a wide variety of workshops *****

...and new things have already happened and will happen:

One is a Special Pre Day, which allows ample time and space for sponsors to evaluate Teaching Certificate Applicants. We have now a process in place for the years to come. Another is an official sponsor meeting.

Both of those events have happened yesterday!

Then a pre-conference participation through Formal Consensus on All Together has been put into place, so that for this AGM most of the process is completed. This allows to keep the Membership Council Meetings during the ATI AGM to a minimum.

Jennifer continues to write:

Now is the time for ATI to flourish from the foundation laid at the 2008 & 2009 AGM`s and take off in A NEW DIRECTION.....

I am impressed! These are really creative and intelligent changes! (music comes in)

I began to wonder, what can I add to this great process and accomplishment, which is already happening and more or less well functioning...and suddenly, while sitting on my little table, I hear a song in the background...I listen to the words..."I believe in angels – something good in everything I see....."

I continued to listen "I have a dream..." (music still in the background)

...and the image of 'hilflos' – helpless, a word written on Zurich`s houses, back in the 1980`s, came into my mind.....



This word 'hilflos' – helpless always touched me deeply, because I felt like this myself at that time. This word was sprayed by a street artist on many walls, on houses all throughout Zurich.

He was the first street artist at that time in Switzerland, expressing his feelings in that way and when they found him, he was punished for what he had done.

I did not know then, any means by which I could organize my life in a more satisfactory and joyful way..... I felt helpless

Why do I share this with all of you now?

Because with the Alexander Technique I received the means, whereby I could take responsibility for my life. I learned how to become aware of my own responses to life's stimuli and I started to enjoy the process of a constructive and conscious guidance and control.

I am sure that I am not the only one in this room who has re-directed his own misuse with the help of this work.

You might have had less successful performances and now you are able to re-organize them into successful experiences.

You might have had to cope with pain and you learned how not to interfere with the marvelous design and support of your body and your whole system.

You might have had to cope with anger and hate and you experimented with awareness in action and you found new responses in your communication with others by allowing the growing wish to understand the person and the situation, before you wished to be understood.

All of this leads us into a New Direction in our life with new directions for our life.....

There are many individuals all around the world who feel 'hilflos' – helpless, who are searching to find A New Direction....

There are so many challenges in the world which cry for A New Direction...

And here we are, each one of us, gathering as members of a community, called the Alexander Technique International, wishing to understand A New Direction for ATI.

Usually I was not too much interested in ATI's website. Only when I needed some information about an ATI member I wished to contact or when I needed some good English text describing and explaining the Alexander Technique.

During the last year, however, since my participation in CCC, Certification Coordinating Committee, I used it often, to search and find information in relation to the sponsorship process of ATI. I found not only interesting, but helpful information, as well.

Up in the Swiss mountains, I took my time and had a more careful look into what is offered on that site. I was very impressed when I realized how much work had been done for the membership since

the foundation of ATI in 1992. I realized as well that ATI has become 18 years old and is moving out of its adolescent - teenager time, developing into the capacity of presence and action, using the already built up knowledge of the years behind...

While looking at ATI's website I strongly felt that there is something missing. It seems to me that this platform is too much ATI and membership oriented, too much inside oriented. Which is not bad.

On the other hand I started to imagine a quality, which would capture the curiosity of the public reader and ATI's membership and which could create a wish out there...the wish to belong to THIS community.

... so, I have a dream...

I remember an idea which touched my interest and curiosity while being on an international telephone meeting about how to enhance ATI's website. There, I learned that it could be possible to prepare a personal page for every member. On this page one could see a photo, the coordinates of that person and whatever this person wishes to share. If I imagine that I can go to the ATI website, to the teacher's part and look at faces and at written information, my heart opens up and I feel a sparkle of joy...



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Rosa Luisa Rossi has been in contact with the Alexander Technique for about 20 years. Continuous learning is her motto and so she has enlarged her teaching activities with observation skills, group teaching and application of the Technique in a variety of important activities.

Her imagination for her work is the development of human potential and she continuously discovers and creates new areas of application for the public. She teaches worldwide in German, English, French and Italian. Along with her private teaching she offers residential workshops and special courses in relation with vision work and other fields of knowledge relevant to the Technique. She works with artists and sport practitioners. Her special interest and skill is in the application of the Technique in corporate and business environments. She is deeply inspired by her recent studies with a young neuroscientist: their collaboration has brought about a deeper understanding of how the Alexander Technique relates to scientific knowledge.

She was one of the three directors of the 5th International Congress for Teachers of the Alexander Technique, which took place in August 2005 in Lugano, Switzerland.

Program 2011

Private lesson:	45 min / CHF 100.- Zürich & Rheinfelden
Group teaching:	Introduction to the Alexander Technique
ALTEVO:	Neural Vision Improvement & Alexander Technique
Midday Workshops:	Austria & Turkey
Continuous Learning:	Alexander Technique in relation with Neuroscience
Work in Companies:	Therapy, Health / Success, Zürich / Swiss National Bank

As far as I know ATI would be the first Alexander Technique society promoting its members in this way. This seems much more attractive to me than just reading lines of information with name, address, e-mail, and telephone numbers.

To offer something like this does activate both sides of the brain, the creative and imaginative as well as the logical.

Out of my latest study with neuroscience in relation to the Alexander Technique, it's becoming clear to me that the new direction in education and business is to bring information in such a way, that both sides of the brain receive stimuli and are stimulated to co-work with each other.

I would like to make a little test. Please follow me.

I learned this experiment by reading a book written by Vera F. Birkenbihl, a popular specialist regarding learning techniques based on brain research. It concerns right and left brain activation and coordination.

Let's see how many in this group can repeat the following text, which is composed of three sentences. I am going to say this text to you and after the first time of you listening to it let's see how many of you can repeat it. Clear and ready?

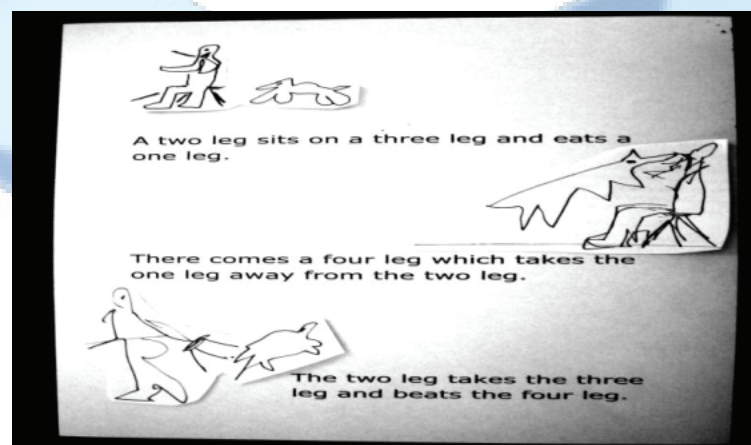
This is the text:

"A two leg sits on a three leg and eats a one leg. There comes a four leg which takes the one leg away from the two leg. The two leg takes the three leg and beats the four leg."

Who can repeat the three sentences? Please put up your hand...Who would like to repeat it....?

I have made this test with myself and others. I was not immediately successful in the beginning and I observed that a few others just got it immediately. What is the difference?

That is Vera F. Birkenbihl's message: Imagine while you think!



People who can create an image or a story around information can accomplish this task of repetition much more fluently. If one uses both sides of the brain while receiving information, one will remember the information again at any time in any place under any circumstance without effort.

One of the many things I like about ATI is that this community and membership contains so many creative people! I believe that in the future we can make more use out of this potential.

...I have an idea...

During this ATI AGM, I am the person with whom you can connect if you wish to share whatever creative idea you have, which would allow ATI to connect more with the 'outside world' and with the support of its members for such contacts. I have this little booklet with me. It contains already some ideas...

I will take notes of your ideas of how ATI can create opportunities for the public to receive a creative and inspiring quality of Alexander Technique Teaching.

I imagine something attractive, which makes 'the public' want to have it. People out there should feel while reading ATI's website:

- THIS IS WHAT I AM LOOKING FOR

- THIS IS WHAT I WANT

- THIS IS A PRACTICE I CAN ENJOY

How can we make the Alexander Technique and ourselves more visible to the world?

How can we create means and find words, so that this work can move into the world. We want to demonstrate how the Alexander Technique is one of the most important and interesting methods for learning, how not to continue to do what interferes with ease and happiness in life.

(music comes in..... the song 'Satisfaction' by Aretha Franklin)

"I can't get no satisfaction, I can't get no satisfaction... and I try.... and I try and I try..... and I try..... I can't get no..... I can't get no....."

There is a new taste of satisfaction to be explored through the Alexander Technique and Frank Pierce Jones said:

The technique is not a treatment, it is a discipline, that to be effective, has to be applied in the activities of daily life.

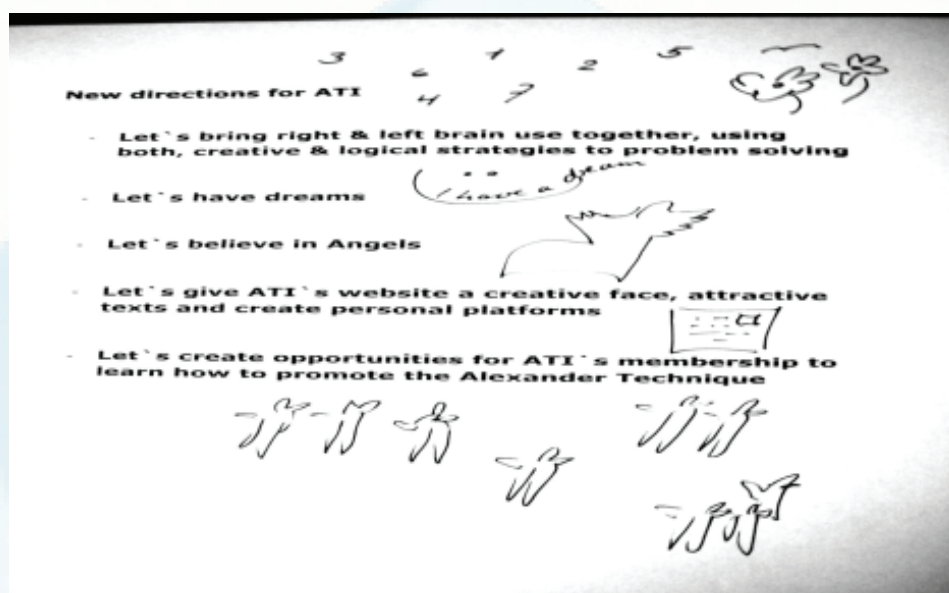
The reward is an increase in competence and self-esteem and in the sensory satisfaction that accompanies self-knowledge and self-control.

Let's spread the information around, that it's pleasurable to cultivate one's own response-ability, and to make a choice for a new direction, for a new experience.

And the importance in this is the experience:

"It was my choice – I did it myself – no one else did it for me."

So in addition to Jennifer, my suggestions for ATI's New Direction are the following directions:



(music..... "I believe in Angels..... something good in everything I see I have a dream....." fading in...fading out...)

Am I an impractical dreamer? I am not! I am a worker and I know that I can make things happen.

Please come and share with me your ideas. I will take notes and then organize them into categories. In accordance with the ATI board let's see in one year's time what we have been able to put into practice.

Before ending my keynote speech I would like to thank RJ Fleck for his creative and technical support.

And now let's move into the coming days with Exploration – Playfulness and Camaraderie!

Rosa Luisa Rossi has been involved with the Alexander Technique since 1979 and has been teaching since 1986. She trained as an Alexander teacher from 1983 – 1986 in Zurich with Jacqueline Webster and Irma Rellstab, both of whom were trained in England by Peter Scott. Rosa Luisa works privately in Switzerland, organizes workshops, has done pilot projects in Kindergarten and in high schools and has worked as well with school teachers. She is invited to teach at Alexander Training Courses in Europe, America and Japan. She is a Co-Director of “Think out of the box”, a company specialising in Alexander Technique workshops for corporate clients. Her commitment is to bridge the gap between the different approaches to this work. To this end, she is a member of the Affiliated Society SVLAT (Swiss Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique), as well as an active member in ATI (Alexander Technique International).



The Improbable History of ATI: A Fairytale of Enchanted Entrainment Keynote Speech October 2022 Virtual Conference on the 30th Anniversary of the Founding of ATI



BY TOMMY THOMPSON

First, before we have our Fairytale, I want to thank the board for inviting me to give the keynote. I appreciate the invitation very much, for over thirty years ago, when ATI first appeared on the stage, I gave the keynote at our second annual meeting in Maryland in 1994. This was my first full year as chair of ATI. I went on to serve for four more years.

Then, my keynote had a similar title, 'Entrainment,' however with less history, for it was in the spring of 1992 when 28 of us gathered together to create a new organization. We met for two full days, seated around long tables set up so everyone could see everyone else. We talked about all the details of our new organization, and one detail was what to call our newly founded society. We wanted a name that would reflect our identity as an organization and define our reasons for creating a new Alexander Technique society, a name that would clarify our shared vision. Then, a single quiet voice captured the attention of the entire assembly. Eckert Schlop, a trainee in my school, said softly, "Alexander Technique International." Unanimous agreement!

We had a shared vision. We had a name! It was a name we could belong to, a name we could grow into. It was international and inclusive.

At that time we were mostly Americans, except for Eckart, Austrian born, and Doris Dietschy, a teacher from Basel, Switzerland, later Chair of the Swiss society and who at the time was visiting my training course. Doris was our very first non-American member, launching us as a truly international organization!

My current keynote, now rich and woven with history of individual and collective growth and astonishing achievement, is a testimonial of the fruition of a dream: Build it and they will come. I see what we have managed to achieve as nothing short of a fairytale, of dreams come true. Of vision made manifest. And so I have divided my keynote into three parts.

The first part is a prologue, where I explain the improbable founding of ATI in the midst of societies such as the Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT), each of which had a long history and a strong organizational structure.

The second part is an enchanted story of entrainment, a Fairytale, if you will, to lighten the fond melancholy of remembrance, and to honor what a long time ago in a far away land, was thought impossible. Yet it happened. For our story does indeed have the trappings of 'Once upon a time.'

And the third part is my invitation to you, who are the future of ATI, many of you much younger than I who also have dreams and visions of a better world in which you can pose your questions and observations and engage in discussion about your current thoughts, about how you view ATI and where you might want to see us go from here.

What's Past is Prologue'

....Mr William Shakespeare

In my inaugural keynote thirty years ago, ATI was divided. David Gorman and I had introduced a motion at the 1993 meeting in Boston to establish a way for ATI to certify teachers. We had always had certification as a goal, that is why we established the Professional Development Committee with one of its tasks being: to develop a means for evaluating the competencies of teachers. However our proposal, which set up a system of Sponsors to evaluate people for teaching certificates, was opposed by a significant number of our members. It was a struggle between the practicality of how we can certify people so our members can have a necessary professional certification, versus the value of how we can continue to follow the means to that certification that we established with the Professional Development Committee.

This division certainly was not intended; however, the understanding of our vision and purpose that we had in 1992 was an unexamined understanding. We all "knew" what our vision was, but did not understand that what we meant by "knowing" was different from what others meant by "knowing." And at that time in our history, ATI was using Robert's Rules as a means of making decisions, and in all voting systems, someone wins, and someone loses and nothing gained holds fast for very long.

This division was so great that after the motion passed four fifths of the board resigned. I was left as the sole remaining member of the board. I appointed an interim board deliberately composed of members who both agreed and disagreed with the motion that passed. I hoped that in governing together we might reconcile and resolve differences and move forward.

Thus at the 1994 AGM, when I gave my first keynote, I was faced with the feeling that there was a prevailing wind of separating into two societies. Some people truly believed that the motion we passed did not conform to their vision of ATI. Although deeply saddened, and at a loss as to how to keep our shared dream alive, I also experienced a profound commitment to keeping our dream alive, a commitment I still hold sacred 30 years later.

Thus, my purpose in the keynote in 1994 was to unite a body of teachers and trainees, all of whom had like-minded goals, but with disparate ways of achieving them. Many people were not entirely happy, and some at this second AGM were downright displeased with the motion that had passed

the previous year. My second purpose was to emphasize that as a collective body of visionary individuals, no matter our differences, we were poised as never before in the long history of divisive politics in the Alexander world to put David before Goliath and see what happened.

Just prior to our annual ATI meeting, where I would give the keynote in 1994, two members, Jan Baty and Diane Zuck, told me that they had recently taken a workshop with C.T. Butler, the founder of a way of governance based upon consensus—not voting where majority rules. Voting is what got us into trouble in the first place. Both women spoke with me and recommended that I invite C.T. to advise us. I spoke with C.T. and thought he might be the perfect antidote. I took this suggestion to the board and we invited C.T. to attend our meeting.

C.T. had devised a way of governance interestingly enough more in keeping with the principles we professed to teach, that is paying more attention to the ‘means-whereby’ a goal might be reached rather than opposing sides of a motion focused on outvoting the other. Had we had Formal Consensus when I approached the original ATI board with my concern that unless we somehow professionalized our organization early on in our formation I questioned whether we would be taken seriously and grow in membership, things might have gone very differently. C.T.’s way of communication when discussing proposals and ultimately bringing proposals to consensus through a step by step process where all concerns are equally valid, made a lot of sense to me. I asked C.T. Butler to join us in our meeting. “Observe us”, I said, “and make a recommendation about how to move forward based on your experience using Formal Consensus.” He did so, and suggested we put aside all our differences and focus on what we agreed on. Essentially we were asked to agree to disagree and to invite conflict, not avoid it as an obstacle, and to move forward with our shared vision. We were to explore a new way of governance using his Formal Consensus map. Even C.T. thought Formal Consensus was more closely aligned with Alexander Technique principles, and what we taught others. Over time, we would become more experienced using his methods and we would gradually cease to govern by Robert’s Rules where one side wins and the other side loses. With Formal Consensus, shared consensus was the ultimate goal, not unresolved division. We would never again make members feel they were neither listened to nor being heard. Sounds like a fairytale to me!

Formal Consensus certainly let us catch our breath, given the internal divide in our membership with some founding members feeling betrayed. Without some means of reconciliation we were poised at that stage of growth in ATI to lose a commonly shared dream. So we followed the fairytale! We all agreed we preferred to stay together rather than split, and so we decided to give C.T. Butler free rein. The rest is history, and it is a beautiful history of reconciliation through mutual respect and the willingness to learn, grow and change.

Although we were still a relatively small group when ATI was founded—the affiliated societies being huge in number compared to a highly motivated rag tag group of devoted visionaries—we prevailed. At the time, the usual method of training was set in stone. You might even say set in tablets as an absolute. This was their way, based on teaching protocols that had been handed down, and they

had a right to abide by their precedent. As did we have the right to believe in ourselves, and in our vision to have the same right.

In my keynote in 1994, I suggested that we were poised at just the right time in Alexander Technique history to acknowledge other ways of viewing training, as well as what we teach and how we teach, all having been given to us by our respective teachers, primarily Dr. Frank Pierce Jones and Marj Barstow. I suggested we could not have created our society in previous years, nor could it have waited for later years to come. For we were like the shopkeepers in the late nineteenth century, who noticed that when they set one clock ticking away, soon the one next to it began to tick in rhythm to the first and so on until all the clocks in the shop were ticking in rhythm.

What set the clocks ticking?

Entrainment!

The breakup of STAT as the mother society, as suggested and initiated by David Gorman, led to numerous societies scattered in various countries as Affiliated Societies, albeit attached to the mother society, STAT, and dedicated to then-established procedures to train teachers. However, AT teachers who were not a part of those societies and who were actively teaching the AT having been trained primarily with Marj Barstow, or who had studied with Frank Pierce Jones, were not invited to join the affiliated society in the USA, NASTAT (North American Society for Teachers of the Alexander Technique). For we did not train according to the procedures and standards then established by STAT years before the formation of affiliated societies.

In addition, at that time, there were trainings run by Bruce and Martha Fertman, Catherine Kettrick and David Mills, as well as Barbara and Bill Conable. I was running a training course of my own; so too were others. And more would come later. What were we to do, we all wondered, talking amongst ourselves? And although there was talk among the Affiliated Societies of grandfathering in some non-STAT trained teachers, a waiver policy was introduced instead, whereby non-affiliated teachers would be reviewed by three senior teachers to evaluate their competency as a teacher. Sounds like ATI....

Word of mouth began to envisage a common desire. Word of mouth became the order of the day. These non-affiliated teachers envisioned an additional professional society based on inclusiveness, and recognition of the teachers they themselves trained with. For a rejection of these non-affiliated teachers was to some extent a rejection of the senior teachers with whom they had trained. And this made no sense. Both Frank Jones and Marj Barstow were two of the most skilled and innovative teachers of their era.

This new vision spread by word of mouth. What if there were indeed a professional society formed that reflected a different approach to the teaching of the Alexander Technique principles and concepts? Could we work together with ourselves in addition to working in comrade with the affiliated societies? Ultimately, many teachers, especially those who were running training schools,

wanted to have their own voice. The Affiliated Societies had the perfect right to ask of teachers what they felt to be the fair measure of competency. No one argued with this. The point was, most of the non-affiliated teachers had trained under a substantially different set of values.

The clocks were ticking.

Then, in 1987, a year after the Affiliated Societies were formed, Frank Ottiwell, who ran a school in San Francisco and who had been trained by Judith Leibowitz in NYC—who had formed her own organization, ACAT (American Center for the Alexander Technique)—was attempting to get the Barstow trained teachers into ACAT West. Then they would automatically be grandfathered into NASTAT. Diana Bradley was in charge of documenting their hours. Meetings were held in San Francisco and this is when the idea for the ‘Guild’ was bandied about as a name for a society the Barstow trained teachers considered starting.

While casual and informal meetings were being held by teachers trained by Marj Barstow, at the 1990 third International Congress in Engleberg, Switzerland, Catherine Ketrick, David Mills, Bruce Fertman, John Macy and Claudia Vess met on a staircase to talk about how they could establish a new professional society. They all agreed to contact everyone they knew to invite them to a founding meeting, which John and Claudia arranged for May of 1992.

Then in early 1992, before our founding meeting in May, the Massachusetts State Legislature in Boston, USA was on the verge of requiring anyone who touched a person professionally to be licensed. The only society that was legally recognized at the time was NASTAT. If Massachusetts recognized NASTAT as the sole existing Alexander Technique society, teachers already teaching privately and at universities and running training programs would not be recognized by the Massachusetts state legislature. This of course might require us to abandon teaching, or to retrain in one of the affiliated societies to be recognized as legitimate and legal teachers. Furthermore, it would set a precedent for other states in the USA to recognize NASTAT as the sole professional society in existence. I envisioned numerous AT teachers across the United States no longer legally allowed to teach what they were already teaching privately, in universities, in conservatories or in training courses then or in the future.

I had become entrained. I simply walked into the shop and joined the growing group of ticking clocks when I made a phone call as soon as I learned what was happening in the Massachusetts State Legislature. On the day before the state legislature was poised to vote, I phoned two people who I knew held title on paper to an Alexander Technique organization called the Guild. As I explained earlier, the Guild was a leftover, not yet a complete society, created by some of the Barstow teachers during the period of time when the affiliated societies were created. And two Alexander teachers, John Macy and Claudia Vess from Maryland, I thought held title to the former ‘Guild.’

So I phoned them and asked “Do you still want to found a new society?” “Yes” was their reply. Then I explained what had occurred. I explained that all we had to do was to make me a member of their society overnight as a member from the state of Massachusetts. Then there would be a second

Alexander Technique society on file with their vote in addition to the listing of NASTAT, which would secure our place in line. This would give us the freedom to nourish and grow our own society. All was legal and I explained I would then contact the representative from the state legislature prior to their vote, which I did, and introduce the Guild. The Guild had been revived!

Then a few months later, 28 of us met in May, 1992 in the state of Virginia, and founded Alexander Technique International, a motley band of upstarts which quickly grew in number to 155 in one year. And from the outset all were agreed we should be inclusive and international.

When David Gorman and I introduced the proposal that was adopted at the 1993 AGM in Boston, we borrowed the idea from David Mills. David had written to David Gorman, when Gorman was instrumental in establishing NASTAT, to suggest certification through evaluation by three senior teachers, preferably from three different training backgrounds, whom everyone could trust, to evaluate candidates for a teaching certificate. While this idea was not adopted by NASTAT, the idea became the basis for our proposal, and established the original "Sponsorship" system.

At our annual meeting in 1993 the Sponsorship proposal was introduced, and passed. This created our first dissonant note. Some believed it was too early to increase membership, that we must wait until we were more fully defined. Some believed that we should follow the commitment we made to the Professional Development process when we established ATI in May 1992. In fact, this AGM was later referred to as The Boston Massacre by those who objected to the proposal; and rightly so because we had not yet learned how to work together.

Thus, at the meeting where I gave the inaugural keynote in 1994, none of us were certain we could move ahead together. However, prior to the meeting, at the recommendation Diane Zuck and Jan Baty, I called C.T. Butler, informed him of our plight and asked whether he was interested. The rest is history. Another tick. Now here we are today, 550 plus members, fully governed through Formal Consensus, albeit tailored to suit our vision /mission, and on equal footing with the community of Alexander societies worldwide, with whom we will always seek ways to resolve our differences in belief. For they are sisters and brothers in our eyes today, and always will be. Traditionally, nearly half of our membership comes from teachers joining ATI in addition to maintaining membership in their mother society in a given country.

Lastly, before we hear our fairytale, I would like to give special recognition and appreciation to ALL the founders of ATI, and a very special appreciation for the ones who left ATI after the sponsorship proposal was passed, who believed they were denied their vision. Their vision and devotion to an ideal was just as valid as any of us who carried on, many of whom, I might add, over and during the past 30 plus years, have become life-long friends. So special recognition and appreciation to John Macy and Claudia Vess, who along with me, overnight raised a dormant document, a 'Sleeping Dragon' if you will, and set in motion what others had been wanting to materialize for a number of years. I simply stumbled into the fray, and found myself chair of ATI, to which I devoted my life to chairing for five years and serving on the board for 16 years and serving on seven committees until I

exhausted my tenure and was asked to take a break and allow younger members to hold office.

Today, I welcome a break and hope to see new members adopt their roles serving ATI as the founders have done and with as much devotion as we have had. This is the way we continue to grow and serve the public for whom we teach. Just take a look at our current executive board, a singularly stellar, indefatigably committed assembly of individuals who have probably had more constructive meetings in the past year or so than any board has ever had. All of our boards have in some fashion distinguished their office but this one deserves a round of applause. Look also at the commitment of committee members, many of whom have served well beyond their tenure simply because they love serving. Then ask “How can I join this caravan and become part of a fairytale?” It’s simple. Join a committee. Run for the Executive Board.

A Fairytale of Enchanted Entrainment

ATI is a fairytale or certainly has all the trappings of resembling of a Fairytale, and if not, certainly a Folktale.

First let me give you the definition of fairytale: *a story originating in popular culture, typically passed on by word of mouth.* Yes, this was certainly the way it began!

Fairytale

- *a children’s story about magical beings and lands.* Yes, this too was at the root of the formation of ATI. We were considered outliers and the whole 30 plus years have often been magical.

Folktale

- *a story originating in popular culture, typically passed on by word of mouth.* Yes this was certainly the way it began! Word of mouth!
- *something resembling a fairy tale in being magical, idealized, or extremely happy.* What can I say?! A perfect description of our passage!

Now sit back and enjoy our Fairytale; a light hearted look at how we came to be.

Once upon a time....

there was a giant castle called ‘Society of Teachers of the Alexander Technique (STAT) where all the AT teachers in the land lived, worked and took care of all the people in the kingdom. All the knights swore allegiance to their king and queen.

Soon there was an AT teacher, a knight named David, who had an idea. His idea was to divide the kingdom into Affiliated Kingdoms, called countries, where the countries would decide how to help the people. So there was a call spread through the land and a Congress was formed by a knight

named Michael to announce the changes and all countries were invited, even those who were from distant lands, called distant-landers. These distant-landers swore no allegiance except to their own teachers and not to the ruling King and Queen.

All was going well in this transition until Knight David saw the beginnings of a rift occurring that he neither intended nor anticipated as all the countries with their kingdoms became wary of the knights from the distant lands even though they had been invited by Knight Michael to the Congress. Understandably, they felt their way was the true way, having never experienced another way.

Soon, some of the distant-lander knights began to wonder whether they should have their own Great Kingdom, not having been invited unequivocally into the Great Kingdom as they had hoped. Murmurs were heard throughout the distant-kingdoms.

And then one day, in one of the distant-lands, Sorcerers did harm to people in need. And the Grand Master decided to license anyone in all kingdoms who touched another in all kingdoms. Yet they could only accept kindred knights, even though many in the Great Kingdom thought otherwise.

Meanwhile, a knight, who had long standing friends in all of the kingdoms, including the Supreme Kingdom and, respected by most and who sided with no one, Knight Tommy, who having been seasoned himself from many battles, when he heard of the universal decree that might not include his fellow brother/sister distant-landers and of no small mention, himself, he sat by a tree of life and he heard a voice saying, "Build it and they will come!" And he made a phone call. For he knew that two people in one of the distant countries held a magic paper that gave license to create a unique and different kingdom that would reflect different values than the ones inherited from the 'Teaching's' creator. Overnight, the three crafted from the magic paper, a sacred document that would magically designate all future members apart from the original three, as members of a new Realm, but only if they all signed the magic document! So when the cock crowed the next morning and the next day dawned, phone calls were placed to distant-landers who had been speaking to others in the distant kingdoms about creating something of their own which would reflect their belief in a world without borders, an inclusive world, one that reflected the vision of their respective teachers.

Twenty eight distant landers met under an oak tree in one distant kingdom and signed the magic document that sealed their bond that exists today, only with 550 plus members, many of whom are from the Affiliate kingdoms because the message of inclusion as opposed to exclusion is the only way to live happily ever after

The End

Bells ringing throughout the land.

And the moral of this tale—for fairytales must have their moral—is that everyone ultimately is joined by a common vision of inclusion. It's just that sometimes the fog is too thick to see the equality found in diversity.

For the past 50 years **Tommy Thompson** has taught and applied the Alexander principles and concepts and has guided thousands towards a life well lived more to their satisfaction. He has taught many different people doing many different activities, in many places all over the world, including teaching on 30 teacher training courses worldwide. He has given well over 1,000 workshops internationally for Alexander teachers, teacher trainees and the general public in 16 countries. He is the Founder and Director of the *Alexander Technique Center at Cambridge*, where he has been training Alexander teachers since 1983. He is also a founder, charter member, and was first Chair of *Alexander Technique International (ATI)*.

Tommy is the author of *Touching Presence* (with Rachel Prabhakar) and co-author of *Scientific and Humanistic Contributions of Frank Pierce Jones*. He has contributed numerous papers on the Alexander work, Tai Chi, and theater to Alexander and theater journals, periodicals, martial arts journals, and newsletters. Tommy is currently at work on a new book, *An Awakened Life: Evolution of a Teacher* and a revised edition of *Touching Presence*, currently translated in Japanese, French, German, Korean with Spanish and Dutch translations in-progress.

Unified Self in a Divided World as a Call to Action Keynote Speech October 2025 in Philadelphia PA, USA, October 2025



BY ROBYN AVALON



When I was first asked to offer this keynote, I thought, ‘why me?’ Really - We all have something unique and meaningful to offer the community. So, why me in particular, at this point in time, with this theme - the Unified Self in a Divided World.

I could only assume that the universe is asking me to look for something from my particular life experience with AT that might be useful for the larger community right now, and that it’s my job to discern it and share it with you tonight. So what might that be?

As we travel through tonight’s journey, I will share a few of my personal areas of research as well as many of my current questions. I hope to evoke the creativity of the group mind-body that gathers under the ATI umbrella, offering an invitation to each of us to share both our experience and our questions generously with each other, with our larger AT colleagues, and with the world at large. I also want to acknowledge ahead of time that many things I will put in front of us tonight may sound like ‘preaching to the choir.’ I realize that many of you have already generated your own research

and tools that address tonight's questions. But are we sharing our experience in a way that helps guide the Work into tomorrow's world? Maybe the choir is stuck in its own comfortable habits? Singing loud and proud in our own little worlds.

Perhaps, like me, you get busy in your own rich and rewarding AT world, seldom pausing to look out and see what everyone else is doing. Not just in ATI, but in all of "Alexander-land," as I like to call it. Sometimes when we look up, it can be a reality-check, even perhaps a wake up call. Wake up and help steer the ship.

- Where is the Work going?
- How does it look from the outside?
- What do the folks out there see or hear when they stumble across our Work - if they do so at all?

So, I'm preaching to the choir to remind us that we have an incredibly important role in 'steering the ship,' in how our Work is presented and perceived in today's world and in tomorrow's world. What if we lift our heads to look around a bit more, and become agents of change and growth in our profession?

This year marks my 50th year inside the Work, (I started young - I came to the Work as a young professional performer) and one thing I have learned is that, if I can identify the non-habitual perspective, or minority view, and play with it a bit, get curious enough about it, it will lead me towards my wholeness, and towards my next step. I often think of this as my 'call to action' - the 'juju' that fuels the conscious creation of my life. So, I invite you to journey with me tonight to find our collective calls to action, through the theme: *The Unified Self in a Divided World*.

What does that phrase mean? To you? To me? To us as a community? To the growth and vitality of the Work in today's world?

At first glance, this sentence seems to lead us towards using our study of the unified self to help support the needs of a divided world - to serve humanity.

Ok - I can get behind that.

But it assumes we can deliver the Work to humanity.

Can we? Are we trained to do that? Are we expected to do that? Maybe...

I decided to look more closely at the sentence, to find the non-habitual perspective that it might offer us - what I call the "hidden gem." At first I explored the relationship between **Unified** and **Divided**, then **Self** and **World**, and finally, **Unified Self** and **Divided World**...But each of these themes are well within our usual study.

What's left?

As I revisited the sentence: The Unified Self in a Divided World, and removed Unified and Divided, and Self and World, because of their familiarity, I was left with a small, seemingly insignificant word- IN.

The Unified Self **IN** a Divided World

And There it is - hiding in plain sight. The invitation to the next step - The essential movement, without which we, and the Work, become stagnant.

The Call to Action

This theme of how we actually share the Work - take it INTO the larger world, in a diverse and accessible way, is often not the center of attention in our professional community. But it is a theme many of us in the room have been thinking about for a long time, and it is one of my main focuses.

I realize that my call to action, tonight, is to offer questions to us all, so that our individual and collective next steps might be more clearly revealed and revitalized.

- What is each of us called to do next, in our own communities and practices?
- What are we called to do differently, nonhabitually, as a professional community?
- How are we limited by our habits of imagination of what it means to share the Work?
- What stops us from imagining new forms, new delivery systems, and new structures for study and training?
- How do we contribute to the tipping point that moves the Work into the world in new, yet-to-be-imagined ways?

One more thing, before we jump fully into tonight's journey, I want to remind ourselves that this *divided world* we are entering might be something inside ourselves. It might show up in the ways we think about and act with each other within the larger Alexander-Land. This *divided world* might be found in the ways we have chosen to reach out - who do we include and who do we not include, when we think about sharing the Work? What does it mean to enter the world that is divided from your habitual choices? And then there is the World out there, in its current state, which is surely mirroring division at many levels.

So, what do we need in order to share the Work in the world - to diverse and mainstream populations?

The most basic answer might be: Easy access to the Work. Accessibility.

Let's call this an accessibility list.

We need:

- An easy way for many people to hear about it
- An accessible way for them to have an experience of it
- An accessible and realistic way for them to study it
- A realistic way for them to train in it

Some questions immediately emerge:

- Do we have those things? As a profession - is it our norm, where all Teachers are expected to have these 'accessibility skills'? Or is it a speciality, held only by those with a particular interest in accessibility?
- Do we train teachers to have skills for sharing the Work in accessible ways?
- Do we include 'accessible sharing skills' in our graduation or membership proficiency expectations?

Let's begin with where we are.

Since we know that you can't change anything you don't notice, *what do we notice* about our habitual ways of sharing the Work? How do we think about it - feel about it - do it - train others to do it? What are the traditional, historical ways? What are the contemporary ways? What are the future ways?

To clarify, for a moment, I do not mean how do we apply the Principles for ourselves, nor how do we use our hands and words to offer it to others -but rather how do we move it *out there* to all those folks who have never heard of it, to the folks who do not have access to it? And how do we get those folks to enter *in here* (*gesture the room*)?

What do we do, in the outer world, so that people can enter the inner world of the Work?

So we've come to our first **CALL to ACTION: Tonotice our individual and collective ways of sharing.**

This is an invitation to look, with non-habitual gaze, towards your own delivery systems. And, perhaps more importantly, your own imagination of what is even possible.

Let's consider our accessibility list.

First, people need to hear about it. How does that happen? There are many ways, here are three I will mention tonight: social media, serving large general populations, and reaching out to new communities.

In today's world, the entire field of social media and online resources is an obvious means. But, tonight I am going to focus on the tools that we use in person, rather than virtually. So I will leave that topic for another discussion.

So then, How else do people hear about the Work?

Usually they are in a field where it is already well known, like performing arts or sports, or they are drawn towards somatic studies, or maybe they are in discomfort and lean towards holistic approaches. These are our bread & butter populations - those folks that we can easily make a living teaching - the folks who are likely to hear about us through their other interests.

But what about everyone else? The mainstream population. Those who would find the Work amazing, but are not in a field that is already related to us...or are not in a life situation where they can access the Work through the ways we traditionally offer it. Are we trained in effective ways to reach out to those people? Is it in our professional consciousness to connect with them, and meet them where they are, in the ways that are possible for them?

If we do want to include the larger, more mainstream populations, we need ways of reaching far more people than individual lessons would ever provide. We need to be able to imagine ways of planting our seeds into large and diverse communities. I will mention one of my own experiences, in the hopes of inspiring you to look around in your life and see where you might also reach your own larger audience. It may not be as far-fetched as you imagine.

My story starts in the mid 1990's. I had the great honor to work with American ballet star Jacques D'Amboise in his **National Dance Institute**. NDI brings dance into public elementary schools, often serving lower income populations. Students have weekly classes, spending a year building up to an amazing group performance. The point of the program is not to teach dance, but rather, life skills. To learn how to never give up on yourself. To learn how we can support each other, and treat each other with respect rather than judgement. (Maybe politicians should dance!)

I taught for NDI for about a decade, working with programs in NM, CO, CA, and NYC, each program serving literally 1000's of kids each year, and I realized that this would be a perfect delivery system for kids to learn some basic tools from AT. Lots of kids. So, with Jacques' blessing, I developed ways to add AT into the teaching curriculum, through stories and movement. This started happening every week in public school dance classes all over the country: kids were learning about 'Mr. Alexander and his Magic Moves' (the kid's named it)!

I particularly remember a dress rehearsal at the end of my first year of incorporating AT ideas. We were in a high school gym, with nearly 1000 young, very excited dancers, warming up for the big performance. I took them through the now familiar movements that held the AT principles we had studied over the year, in the typical NDI call and response style, and was totally struck by the recognition that the 1000 public school kids in this room, and teachers, and school administrators, not only knew about AT, but also something about how to move with their innate design and freedom, and what to do for themselves if they were struggling in some way, using our tools of pause, notice, choose. I remember hoping that they might use these skills in later moments in their lives.

Years later, while renting a vhs at a local video store (remember when we did that?), the clerk recognized me and started doing some of the Magic Moves! He told me how much these ideas had impacted his life. In my decade at NDI, probably 25,000 kids learned about AT. In the 20 years since I left, who knows how many thousands of public school children have been introduced to Mr. Alexander and his Magic Moves!

I ask you, does this count as sharing the Work? Does this fit your, our, habitual way of imagining what sharing looks like?

I would like to point out that this happened because of a simple conversation. I just asked a person from the larger organization to incorporate some of the basic principles in a way that fit the style and audience. It was really just a conversation I had with someone that made it possible. You could do that. We could all do that.

Perhaps we've found our next **CALL TO ACTION: Revisit your habitual ideas of what sharing the Work might look like, and how you might be able to infuse AT into larger communities you are already connected to.**

We have been sitting now for a while, so let's try out an **NDI** style of AT! I invite you to stand up where you are, if you want. You can do it sitting too, if you choose:

In the weekly classes, we took apart each of these movements so that the kids understood what they were about - what the words were asking them to notice and choose - but you all will get it right away. This requires call and response, so I go first and then you go. You do the movements and say the words out loud - very loud - remember you are being an elementary school kids!

Here's an example:

Claps

Stamp my feet

Wag my tail

Flap my wings

Rock my ponytail!!

(New rhythm)

Tuck my tail like a nervous dog

Strut my tail like a quacking duck

Swing my tail like a dinosaur

Now I'm movin' more and more

Nodding with my chin

Nodding with my nose

Can I see the world

While Wiggling my toes

Chin, and nose, and world, and toes

That's the way my movement goes

All sit - That was fun, wasn't it?

By the way - I use this with adults and with seniors too - kids are not the only ones who get to have this much fun! And clearly, it's only a slice - not as sophisticated as lessons will be, but it does offer folks a place to begin. It is easy and clear. It is accessible and fun!

This is an important point when we consider skills for taking our study INTO the world: **easy language!**

In my personal opinion, the language FM used 100 years ago is foreign to today's ear. It is a bit like listening to Shakespeare - you need to acquire a new listening / translating ability. That is a lot to ask at the same time someone is listening inside, maybe for the first time.

I will direct us again to teaching children. Children will lose interest immediately if they cannot connect with your message. At the recent Congress in Dublin, there was a fabulous presentation on AT and education, led by Sue Merry and Judith Klineman, on the **READY LIST**. It was created as a way of teaching the Work to children - and the children actually named it the READY LIST. It is a brilliant example of how to create an accessible and effective form:

STOP - SEE - BREATHE - Soft & Tall

With gestures, again

Make it easy. Make it accessible.

A CALL TO ACTION: Use easy, understandable LANGUAGE

Our 3rd tool for helping people hear about the Work, is to consciously, deliberately reach out to **new communities** - groups that you are not already a member of - groups who might otherwise never come across the Work. Reach outside of your habitual audience; and outside of the Work's habitual audience: Who do you teach, and who do you not teach?

Every year my trainees have to offer an intro to a community they are not a member of. They start by making a list using some basic questions. Something like:

- What do your family and friends do that you think is cool?
- What are things you have always wanted to do, but haven't yet?
- What populations are you interested in serving?

Once you have a list, you reach out to the people who do these things. You Go to them. Explain that you are committed to helping spread this Work into the world, and ask them if they could *help you to do that*.

Maybe offer them a lesson, or offer their community an intro workshop. It is very possible that they will give you space to teach in, as well as provide all of the advertising to fill the room. A room full of people you do not know, and perhaps would never interact with in your everyday life. A room full of people who you have no idea how to advertise to on your own. A great business plan!

A CALL TO ACTION: Make a list of new communities you would like to get to know and reach out to them

Once they have heard about the Work, how do they get a little **taste** of it? Given that the name Alexander Technique offers absolutely no information about what it actually is, it is particularly important for folks to have an easy way to have a first brief experience, usually through an introductory workshop. I know that most of you here tonight already use intros as one of your 'delivery systems.' But that is not necessarily true for our larger AT community.

A little story:

I enjoy exchanging with teachers from different styles, and I have been working with Yehuda Kuperman from Israel for a while now. Yuda and I have vastly different styles, and yet are quite

similar in our overall perspectives. When I shared some of my introductory forms with him, his students looked at me with arms crossed and heads shaking doubtfully - probably waiting for him to totally dismiss me. Yuda was very quiet for a moment, and then, slowly nodding his head, said - "ah, an Alexander Aperitif."

Yes - an aperitif! A little taste.

At the recent Congress, I had some wonderful conversations with young Teachers who had not yet explored introductory workshops as a unique form. For some, this is really new territory. That's important for us to know. And for those of us who have already been playing with this tool for decades, perhaps our **call to action** is to share our skills and experience as much as we can with our peers, so that more Teachers feel confident, and are skilled, in offering these 'tastes.'

Intros are their own unique category of teaching, requiring their own unique skill set. Really successful intros are truly different from teaching a regular workshop or group class.

I am going to take a moment to share a bit of my own research. Just for background, when I was a brand new teacher, I decided that one of my main skills would be teaching intros of all kinds. But to do that, I found I needed different skills than those I had developed for teaching lessons or groups, and I needed to practice.

So, I decided that I would teach an intro workshop, of any size, every single week for 6 months. Every single week, I put together a new group. Sometimes there were 4 people and sometimes there were 40. It did not matter, because all it needed to be was a group of people who had never heard of the Alexander Technique - which honestly, was very easy to find.

After my 'rehearsal period', I moved to once a month, which I pretty much kept going for 20 years. Even now, I still teach a handful each year. Here's the essence of what I've learned - it's very simple:

Go to wherever people gather to do whatever they do and teach them while they do it.

This has a few important ingredients:

First, *GO to Wherever people gather*

You take the intro to them. Wherever they are. Here are some examples of places I have enjoyed teaching. I invite you to close your eyes and imagine yourself teaching there too - probably many of you already have done these too!

In a concert hall with an orchestra, opera company, or chamber music group

A rehearsal studio with actors, dancers, circus, burlesque, or drag performers

At a Pilates studio, fitness center, climbing gym, or gymnastic arena

At a dojo for chi gong, tai chi, or martial arts class

In a training program for somatics, massage, or bodywork
In art studios with painters, potters, weavers, woodworkers, sculptors
In auto repair and metal shops
In recording and film studios
At a knitting or quilting circle, a book club, or a social dance gathering
In a kitchen or on a farm
On top of a mountain with skiers, sky divers, paragliders, or rock climbers
At, or, in, pools, rivers, lakes and oceans, with swimmers, rowers, kayakers
Outdoors with hikers, rock climbers, cross-country cyclists, and ironman competitors
On a basketball court, a football field, a golf course, or equestrian arena
In schools of all types - kindergarden through university
In a business office, or a medical, dental or psychiatric practice,
At a professional conference or continuing education gathering other than AT
At a community center, a women's clinic,
In a nursing home, rehab center, hospice, or shelter
In a temple, synagogue, church, or sweat lodge
In private homes, at births, and at deathbeds

What is your list? Where have you taken the Work? Where can you imagine taking it next?

I'll mention that one of the skills for going to people's gathering space is to **Fit into the timing that they already use:**

If it is a rehearsal, for example, they are not likely to give up a great deal of their time for an intro - maybe 10 or 15 minutes. Sometimes, a group will have you as a special guest or perk for their community and want you to fill 30 minutes or an hour or 2. Other times folks will come for a day or even a weekend - maybe even a whole week. The flexibility you develop will allow you to offer a taste of the Work to anyone, anywhere, of any age, doing anything.

The second point in the sentence is:

teach them while they are doing whatever they do!

Use their activities and real situations, so they experience what the Principles will actually do for them, inside of something they care about:

In my experience, intros titled “Intro to the Alexander Technique” tend not to draw as many people because they have no idea what it is or what it might do for them. So find out what they need, what’s important to them, and teach to that. A note on this:

When I mention this idea to some colleagues, the response I still hear, even as recently as this past August in Dublin, is literally “but there are no chairs!”

I mention this because while it is probably not true for the group in this room right now - it is still deeply embedded in our professional ‘mind’ and ‘imagination.’ And that is important for us to acknowledge. Especially if we want to participate in ‘steering the ship’ towards greater accessibility. It is not just about what we do, in this community, but what we are all doing. That is what the larger world sees.

Going out to people makes you figure out how to teach outside the studio. We are clever, talented teachers, and each of us can separate the “IT” of the Work from the forms through which we were trained to deliver it. Separate form from content, and take the IT on the road! Into the ‘divided world’

A CALL TO ACTION: Make a list people who are currently divided from your habitual audience - and take IT to them

Back to our accessibility list: they hear about it, they taste it, now we need to offer them accessible ways to study it. So, how do we, as a profession, share the Work in the world?

Well, Traditionally, historically, the training focus is only on working with one person at a time. This one-to-one format takes place through individual lessons, with the intention that the student will take these private lessons repeatedly. While this format is certainly effective, we might acknowledge that it has significant limitations.

- For one, it is for the *privileged only*:

The student must have the time, means, and financial resources to travel to a teacher and pay for private lessons *repeatedly*, in order to access the power of the Work.

- And two, *It serves a limited number of students*:

Each teacher can only serve as many students as they have available teaching hours - maybe 40? or less, each week? When you take into account the number of lesson slots filled by the need for ongoing study - how many new students can be taken in?

The one-to-one delivery system is hierarchical in terms of accessibility, and limiting in terms of

widespread exposure.

Now, I am not suggesting that we drop this one-to-one system - I am as much a 'touchaholic' as you are. But rather, I suggest that we acknowledge its limitations and seek to add additional delivery systems that allow the Work to become more accessible to a more diverse range of people. And, of course, not all training programs focus solely on individual lesson skills. There are programs which include broader teaching skills as requirements for graduation, in addition to the one-to-one teaching skills.

Having trained people myself for over 30 years, I fully appreciate that not everything fits into any single training program! Which is why we have post-graduate studies and continuing education - so that each of us, individually, can flush out whatever skills and perspectives were not included or prioritized in our own training. But AT Teachers will not be inspired to add these 'additional delivery skills' if their need and importance is not collectively recognized nor prioritized...For example, perhaps becoming embedded in our definitions of proficiency for graduations and memberships. Here are some questions to consider:

- What are our biases on the ways the Work can be shared - *our delivery systems*?
- How do we habitually limit our *imagining* of what might be possible?
- Do our *delivery systems* fit today's world? Or are they designed for another time - even perhaps a century ago?
- Perhaps most importantly, are we challenging ourselves, as a community, to ask these questions?

A CALL to ACTION: To question our professional habits on the need to prioritize more accessible and equitable delivery systems

Maybe this is one of the reasons the Work is not so widely known in the general public?

Perhaps we, as a profession, do not yet prioritize training teachers with the sharing skills they need to make the Work accessible and easily available to today's population?

It is a question worth considering. Let's look for a moment at the delivery systems for some neighboring somatic practices:

- **Feldenkrais** - just a guy's name - similarly non-descriptive as Alexander

Delivery forms: individual sessions AND a group form (ATM's)

- **Rolfing** - just a gal's name - similarly non-descriptive as Alexander

Delivery forms: individual sessions AND a group form (Rolf Movement Integration)

- **Treager** - just a guy's name - similarly non-descriptive as Alexander

Delivery forms: individual sessions AND a group form (Mentastics)

- **Pilates** - just a guy's name - similarly non-descriptive as Alexander

Delivery forms: individual sessions AND a group form (mat class)

Each of these disciplines offers an easily accessible group form, which is designed to feed the individual lesson form. Clearly, people will get more specific personalized information in any one-on-one form. But how will they know that they want more information? How will they deepen their personal practice to the point where they want to have private lessons? And, significantly, how can those who cannot afford private lessons also access the benefits of ongoing study?

The obvious answer to these questions is group teaching.

Group Teaching is an art form unto itself. It is not simply a group watching an individual exchange, although that might be a part of what would be included in a group experience. There are *skills and techniques* unique to group teaching - to creating the group container. There is a *craft* to building etudes where people have a direct personal experience of either a principle of the Work or a skill that you need in order to study the Work - like, sensory awareness or kinesthetic volume. There are *tools* for creating the group body-mind, where the learning is accessed from the intelligence of the larger whole - Similar to the wisdom of the group voice evoked from indigenous Council Circles and Quaker meetings.

One of my mentors is **Parker Palmer**, a brilliant pedagogue and author of many books on teaching, including *The Courage to Teach* (1997) and *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004). He is also a Quaker, by the way. Palmer offers this definition: *teaching is the intentional act of creating a container where learning can happen.*

.....***teaching is the intentional act of creating a container where learning can happen.***

It leads us to consider the 'crafting of the container' as the *primary* job of the teacher. The 'crafting of the group experience.' For me, this is at the heart of teaching, and it has the capacity to transform the students as effectively as our hands-on work.

Palmer also offers a very basic image for a non-hierarchical pedagogical design. Imagine a triangle with the tip pointing up. There are many students at the bottom - the wide part. Then there is a teacher in the middle, and the knowledge is at the tip. In this paradigm, the students must go through the teacher in order to access the knowledge. To get from the bottom of the triangle to the tip.

An alternative image would be a circle. The students and the teacher all sit on the perimeter of the circle, and the knowledge is in the center. Each individual has direct access to the knowledge, through their unique lived experiences and perspectives. It is up to the teacher to craft opportunities for each individual to access the collective knowledge, and to share their unique knowing and perspective with the group, allowing everyone to know a fuller truth - not just their own habitual one.

Group teaching is more affordable for the students, it offers them a direct experience, without always needing a teacher's hands; and it builds personal agency and exploration. On a very practical note, if more teachers were trained in effective group teaching, and therefore offered more group classes, then more people would be studying the Work. In one hour, you can either serve 1 person, or 10, or 100, or even 1000. If each of us, worldwide, included even one group (or one more group) each month - our exposure would grow exponentially, and the accessibility of the Work would dramatically increase.

But, to effectively build a group form you need to have the skills - and those skills are different from one-to-one hands-on skills.

A CALL TO ACTION: Create a group form for AT, and offer more group classes.

If you have group teaching skills, find a way to share them with a peer who does not. If you do not yet have them, get them: find a mentor, take Post Graduate courses, attend groups taught by others. Then go out, into the world, and Practice.

The final category of delivery forms I might call mainstream classes. This is offering the Work through **forms that are already well known and 'normal' in today's world**. While everything else I have mentioned might be about thinking outside the box, what if we think *inside* the box as well! What is already in the mainstream mindset. In people's weekly habits?

Well, I am sure you know lots of folks who do their once or twice a week exercise class, just because they know that it is important to exercise, along with getting enough sleep and eating a balanced diet. They do it because they believe it is good for them. Those are the folks who fill the Zumba, Nia, step, jazzercise, water aerobics, spin, Pilates, and maybe yoga classes. There is a lot of them. It is a big mainstream population.

What if AT had a class like that? An AT Mind-Body Fitness Class, or Natural Movement Class or Wake Up (in your life) class? Something that checks the boxes of attending to overall wellbeing, using AT Principles. Really - imagine it! You could:

- Warm up with sensory awareness studies.
- Then easy developmental movement/sequencing studies - maybe a little DART
- Maybe introduce a mapping idea in movement.
- Incorporate everyday movements or simple sports movements.

- Then full out dance and aerobics - get some cardio going.
- Followed by a cool down, a brief constructive rest period.
- All held together with kinesthetic noticing and music. With Pause and Notice and Choose as your main tools.

Why not?

Seriously. Can - we - imagine - it? Or is it too far outside of our habitual visioning of how the Work can be shared in the world.

Even if it is not your style to do the whole fitness class model, you can still reach out to your local Pilates or yoga Studio and offer your version of an AT class for their students. And I am sure some of you are already doing just that - if so, share your research and experience!

Who knows, In a few years, people might be attending AT class 3X each week, just because it is already in their habitual pattern, and we met a need.

A CALL TO ACTION: Expand your imagination about what it might look like to share the Work on a large scale to the mainstream population in your neighborhood, using forms that people are already used to.

Our final step:

They have heard of it, tasted it, studied it, and for some, there will be the desire to train in it.

After all, It happened to us....

I include training tonight because it impacts us all. Since only training programs certify teachers, our collective support of the vitality of all training programs is an investment in our collective future.

Some questions for us:

- What are our habits of imagination when we look towards our training programs?
- Do we, as a professional community, offer training opportunities that meet the realities of people's lives in today's world?
- Do we recognize and support pathways towards certification that are accessible and equitable and realistic - in today's world?

As a trainer, I always look forward to the times when Trainers from around the world get to be in

the room together and share. For the past 20 years there has been a similar theme at the Trainers meetings - how to attract students - literally, how to survive. Many training programs have been dwindling and have even closed. And I do not think it is because people are no longer interested in becoming Alexander Teachers - do you?

Of course, not all programs are suffering. Some have been thriving and growing consistently. What's the difference between the ones that thrive and the ones that don't? It's pretty obvious, if you listen to people describe their programs - the ones that thrive have found ways to meet the realities of the people interested in training. They have successfully separated the training form from the training content, taking into account the reality of the times. This is not an issue of lineage or style, but of imagination and flexibility, and of providing the freedom for training programs to adapt to the present moment.

I would like to share a recent experience with you, again from the Dublin Congress:

Imagine sitting in the room with talented and devoted Trainers from all traditions and lineages and styles, and look into their eyes as they talk about having 1 or 2 or maybe 5 trainees, or none— but when they get one they will start again.

Imagine hearing them each speak of how they are constantly balancing the tension between fulfilling the requirements of their over-riding organizations and finding ways to meet the realities of the people who want to train.

Holding space with these talented people is tough and sad and hard to witness.

This struggle, this current reality of our only system for generating future Alexander Teachers, does not belong behind closed doors: It is for all of us to consider and to help create the tipping point needed for new choices to be possible in our larger professional community. I do not know how or what, but I know something needs to happen.

Maybe Our Collective Call to Action is: To Imagine and actively support new paradigms which encourage Training Programs worldwide to offer formats which meet the needs of the next generation of Alexander Teachers.

I'm reminded of FM's words, from MSI:

The rigid routine we finally refer to as habit, this rigid routine being the stumbling-block to rapid adaptability, to the assimilation of new ideas, to originality versus the mobility of mind, that mobility which will obtain for us physical regeneration and a mental outlook that will make possible for us a new and wider enjoyment of those powers which we all possess, but which are so often deliberately stunted or neglected.

Rigid routine versus mobility of mind.

Are we, as a global profession, stuck in the rigid routine of our own imagination? Maybe our habitual blind spots are not the same as some of our colleagues from the broader Alexander-land, but it would be foolish to think that we do not have our own. How do we see them? How do we address them, and make new choices?

Remember when I asked if you can imagine what the Work looks like from out there? We, in here, have an opportunity, maybe even a responsibility, to step up and create the tipping point of freedom, choice, and growth; and to 'steer the boat' towards widespread accessibility to this extraordinary Work that we all share.

So where did this journey take us?

We have talked about the hidden gem of the word **IN** in **The Unified Self in the Divided World**. We identified the sharing of the work - the delivery systems for taking it **into** the World as the fundamental theme to attend to. We explored our Accessibility List:

An easy way for folks to hear about it

To have an experience of it

To study it

And to train in it

We identified **CALLS TO ACTION**:

- **To *notice* our current ways of sharing.**
- **To imagine how you might be able to infuse **AT** into larger communities you are already connected to.**
- **To create easily accessible **LANGUAGE****
- **To discover new communities, who are not currently included in your habitual audience and reach out to them**
- **To introduce the **Work** by taking it out to where people already gather and teaching them *while* they do whatever they do**
- **To question our habitual perspectives on the *need to prioritize* more accessible and equitable delivery systems**
- **To create and offer effective group forms**

- **To Expand our imagination about using forms that people are already used to - like AT wellness classes**
- **To actively support new paradigms which encourage Training Programs to offer formats which meet the needs of the next generation of Alexander Teachers.**

And perhaps one more:

- **To identify what your personal Call to Action is right now - this year - and take steps towards it.**

As a first step, to get the ball rolling, you might say, I would like to offer you three current examples of how organizations and international communities are already answering these calls to action:

1.) The first is from the Alexander Alliance International. For those who do not know us, The Alliance is the 2nd longest running training program in the world. It is a community of schools evolved from Marjorie Barstow's lineage, with training and post graduate programs offered in the US, Europe, and Asia. The Alliance offers both personal study and teacher training through contemporary forms and styles, with the intention of creating more diversity in how and who we teach. We have been refining group teaching forms for 45 years, and we would like to share our research with the international AT community in a new way.

In response to this Call to Action, and specifically, to the needs expressed at the recent Dublin Congress, The Alexander Alliance has created the **Share The Work Series**. We have created 3 workshops for teachers and trainees from all traditions, offering the essential skills for Group Teaching, Crafting Introductory Workshops, and Technical Skills for teaching through activities and situations. We are offering these workshops at a 50% discount for an entire year.

You can visit this site or copy this QR code for information on scheduling and registration. ShareAT.org or sharethework25@gmail.com

We currently have workshops being planned for North and South America, Europe & UK, Asia, and maybe New Zealand - and we are willing to travel to wherever there is interest, worldwide. (go to the students!!!)

2.) The second offering came out of the Congress 'youth' discussions, which essentially was a call to have a platform for sharing research, experience, and questions that is not attached to any professional organization or lineage.

This new international group has created a new FaceBook group: AT Teachers Collaborative

Their mission states: "This is a new global, neutral platform for AT teachers from around the world to come together in support of our shared profession." You can find them by searching AT Teachers Collaborative on FB <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1Frek5VPUi/> Show QR code

3.) The third offering is called the Sharing LAB thesharinglab@gmail.com TheSharingLab.org

The Sharing Lab is a new form that I imagined and first created in collaboration with ATLP (LIB PRO) a couple of years ago. It is a template for teachers from different lineages and styles to gather in a non-hierarchical container to share practical skills and technique. Anyone can ask a 'how to' question, then anyone can share their 'this is how I do it' form, teaching it to everyone in the room.

The Alliance now hosts Sharing Labs throughout the US, EU, and Asia, supporting all who attend in how to take the form back home, into their own communities, and reach out to the AT community around them, especially from different traditions, to gather and share tools. If you'd be interested in starting a Sharing Lab in your area, please reach out to us.

Finally, I want to thank ATI for offering me this opportunity to share with you tonight.

I hope that the **Calls to Action**, whether the ones we explored tonight or your own, inspire you to look, with nonhabitual gaze, at where we are in our ability to share the Work in the world in more accessible ways to many more people, and to help craft the new choices that we will all need in order to support the vitality of the Work in the future.

I invite us all to respectfully recognize our habits of imagination around what is possible, so that we can collectively imagine our future, allowing us to take action towards moving the Unified Self *into* the Divided World.

Robyn Avalon is the Founding Director of The Contemporary Alexander School, the only USA branch of the Alexander Alliance International; as well as a Co-Director of the Alexander Alliance Europe, and on the Core Faculty of Alexander Alliance Japan. Robyn is also the Creator of Living in a Body™: The Quintessential Owner's Guide to Natural Movement, a Professional Body Mapping Certification Course for educators from all disciplines.

Going Up

BY GEORGE SHINDLER

In addition to the references listed at the end of the poem, personal notes from participation in the Alexander Technique Dublin Congress 2025 at continuous learning sessions, workshops, lectures, and conversations with: Robert Britton, Robert Fripp, Avi Granit, John Nicholls, Peter Ribeaux, Judy Stern, and Jessica Wolf were inspirations for my reflection.



Going up isn't going anywhere - it's being everywhere

called out as thought - our intentions laid bare

maybe there's movement, probably not

the significance is to get rid of what's taut

going up's a sensation we search to find

by inhibiting muscles that habitually bind

the doing is not doing what we know

it's the pause — the no that allows us to grow

consider: the forward and up of head, back or body

a means to that overall end we wish to embody

mindful to avoid any muscular contraction

what we call going up is no vague abstraction

most all that we do interacts in front and below
our necks drop down and block our flow
Alexander discovered how to consciously adjust
going forward and up without any thrust

to see clearly and comprehend our habit
take the opportunity to pause and grab it
say no to the habitual that's always done
apply going up's direction and you've begun

discover the achievement of developing space
opening crucial joints to the acceptance of grace
we haven't stretched in a physical sense
rather allowed room to inhibit what's tense

for eons ascension has had spiritual meaning
our journey seeks a higher state of being
shedding old limitations — integrating essence
with physical experience we diminish poor usance

to give primary upward direction
desire to go up becomes our attention
counterbalanced by series of inhibitions
knowing what not to do also our missions

notice I have said we throughout this poem
F.M. learned with mirrors — he did it alone
today we have teachers to guide with hands on
raise us to witness that spacious dawn

you could do it yourself if you do what he did

but who are we trying to kid
spend ten years or more in a struggle
just to discover the cause of our trouble

when we do too much and pull down
muscular tension is everyone's clown
the excessive use of contraction
the result of stimuli's overreaction

grab it, push, pull or shove
response constricts like a tight glove
pulling down expresses our turtle
habits happen and into that shell we hurtle

pulling down is a sin we all frequently commit
a collapsed attitude is the struggle to outwit
though we may need to make some “Muscular Movement”
it’s the “Actionless Activity” of direction that leads to improvement*

non-doing direction determines the efficiency
of muscular movement’s success or deficiency
frequent conscious direction takes on a texture or tone
a sensation our bodies inculcate as known

what’s my experience of going up and pulling down
life’s habit of tension is a struggle to get around
each moment has collapses of forward and down
thoughts, stress, feelings develop my psychic frown

physical demonstrations of my downward pull
of desperate emptiness from which I want to feel full
can now be consciously refreshed by going up
hinges of being find room to fill my cup

into the vacuum of those released joints
aware of the grace our discernment appoints
forward and up's space turns esoteric godly
into a whole-y experience for the entire body

* see Nicholls: <https://www.johnnichollsat.com/2018/04/21/the-intention-of-upward-direction>

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Personal notes form participation in the Alexander Technique Dublin Congress 2025 at continuous learning sessions, workshops, lectures, and conversations with:

Robert Britton
Robert Fripp
Avi Granit

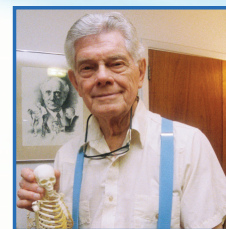
John Nicholls
Peter Ribeaux
Judy Stern

Jessica Wolf

George Shindler lives in West Vancouver Canada with his wife and Groenendael. He bought himself a guitar for his 70th believing it was never too late to learn to play. It wasn't too long before this musical beginner developed fretting hand pain and was led to an Alexander teacher who solved the hand and many other issues getting him in and out of a chair. That was enough to perk his interest and he has been studying the Technique with that teacher, Gaby Minnes Brandes, ever since, now training to become a teacher.

Alexandrians in Full: Reclaiming an Essential Dimension of Use

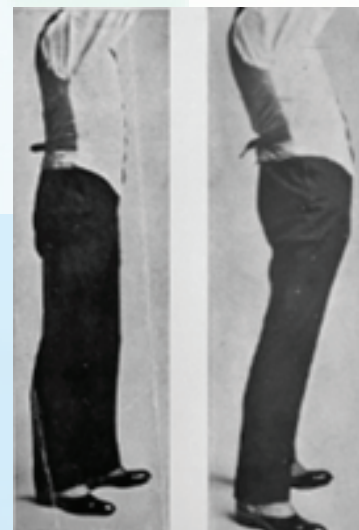
BY RON DENNIS, ED.D., M.AMSAT, ATI



Claire Rechnitzer, M.AmSAT, Spencer Chandler, M.AmSAT, and ChatGPT assisted in locutional aspects of this document; conception, substance, and responsibility are mine alone.

Here I argue that the specific psycho-physical coordination revealed by *Breath as Postural Process*™ (BPP), the work that I have developed since 1985 and in which I am now offering certification, lies at the heart not only of F. M. Alexander’s insistent advocacy of “the great principle of antagonistic action” in his early respiratory work—particularly but not solely *The Theory and Practice of a New Method of Respiratory Re-Education* originally written in 1907 (Alexander, 1995)—but also of his broader conception and embodiment of “a satisfactory use.” Moreover, I say that only by the exercise of a coordination sufficiently like that of BPP, did he (and can we!) realize a dynamic and truly structurally lengthened use, because the same coordination that moves the rib-cage and supports optimal gaseous exchange, i.e., oxygen/carbon dioxide, also supports general lengthening, by distributing the abdominal contents and forces so as to provide optimal musculoskeletal and hydraulic support within the body. It could as well be called *Posture as Breath Process*!

From what Alexander wrote alone, there is surprisingly little detail about his own use, particularly as described in *The Use of the Self* (US), Chapter 1, “Evolution of a Technique” (Alexander, 1984). There, he offers many observations on what misuses he had to avoid—pulling the head back, depressing the larynx, gasping through the mouth—but less on the specifics of a new coordination. He refers primarily to the directions of lengthening and widening, and the role of inhibition, but provides minimal guidance on the positive elements of satisfactory use (p. 111-12). His early respiratory writings focus almost entirely on what *not* to do. The result is a rather vague image of Alexander’s own use—his mature, integrated postural quality, what I have termed in my book *The Posturality of the Person: A Guide to Postural Education and Therapy*, as *posturality*. As he himself noted, it was “impossible to describe ... in detail my various experiences during this long period” (Alexander, 1984, p. 13), and so, in time, he in his own person “became the book,” so to speak, with his pre-1910 writing serving more marketing than instructional purposes. Keeping that in mind is helpful when parsing his early texts.



Nonetheless, it is clear that by 1910, Alexander had realized a “lengthened and widened” posturality. These photographs, first published in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*,

on October 22nd of that year and later appearing in the 1918 Dutton edition of *Man's Supreme Inheritance*, show a clear change in kinematics (movement as perceived visually): grossly, a backward shift of the legs from the ankles and a forward inclination of the torso from the hips. (Alexander, 1918, p.275) What the images obviously cannot show are the internal movements—those of breath coordination and postural stabilization—and the muscular and gravitational forces producing them (kinetics). It will no doubt be suggested that this shift can be attributed to Primary Control, but that concept would not come into his thinking until at least the mid-1920s, being finally introduced and elaborated in US, published in 1932. The 1910 photos, Alexander notes, "...show quite clearly not only the correct position of the feet, *the fundamental problem* (emphasis added), but also how the whole body... is thereby thrown into gear," thus virtually asserting that the global coordination was solely a function of foot placement (Alexander, 1918, p.275). Yet shortly thereafter in the text, he also states that "the teacher must himself *place the pupil in a position of mechanical advantage*" (emphasis added), affirming the crucial role of the teacher, using skillfully guiding hands and nuanced understanding of postural mechanics to bring about the intended posturality (Alexander, 1918, p.277). Apropos, should we not finally agree that Alexander's main contribution to human posturality, together with the vital recognition of Unreliable Sensory Appreciation, was the use of the hands as instrumentality of a Knowing Self to show people directly and sensorily what words alone could not?

For many years then, as documented from the early respiratory writings through *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual (CCCI)* originally written in 1923, Alexander's ideas and actions around use or posturality were shaped primarily by two principles: the more external one of "position of mechanical advantage," as above (1918, p. 277), and the more internal one of "the great principle of antagonistic action" (1995, p. 43). The latter, in Alexander's own words, leads to the "correct use of *the muscular system of the thorax* (emphasis added) in its fullest sense as the primary motive power in the respiratory act" (1995, p. 43). So what exactly is this principle of antagonistic action? In muscle physiology, it refers to the coordination of opposing muscle groups: when one (the agonist) contracts, its counterpart (the antagonist) reflexively lengthens, allowing movement. This interplay is straightforward in joints like the elbow, where biceps and triceps alternate roles in flexion and extension.

When it comes to respiration, however, the antagonistic interaction is more complex—mainly between the diaphragm and the abdominal musculature. But it is not a simple binary relationship, as at the elbow. Their coordinated actions are both spatial and temporal, involving shifts both specific and subtle in tone and timing, making straightforward description difficult. Alexander surely understood this, but did not expand upon it in 1907, probably in part due to sheer complexity and in part to protect his own methods, as the giving of lessons was his livelihood. Not having methods to protect and willing to grapple with the complexity, I have undertaken that deeper exposition in my book *The Posturality of the Person: A Guide to Postural Education and Therapy*, particularly Chapter 7, "Breath as Postural Process," as well as in my article *The Theory and Practice of Alexander's Breathing Method* (*AmSAT Journal* No. 15, Summer 2019).

All that of course lies open to the motivated reader, but the essential point from both the 1907 text and later CCCI, originally written in 1923, is this: achieving maximum control and development in breathing depends on commanding the coordination that creates the expansion and contraction of the chest. The real issue is *how* to do this. For Alexander, the answer was clear: “the teacher, by means of his manipulation, assists (the pupil) to secure the correct readjustment and co-ordination (the desired ‘end’), thus ensuring a series of satisfactory experiences” (1985, p. 203). These are to be repeated until the old habit-pattern is replaced, however gradually, by a new one. Put bluntly: what is essential, according to Alexander, is that we acquire the ability, whether assisted by a teacher or on our own, properly to *MOVE OUR RIBS*. That is the core premise-practice of *Breath as Postural Process*™.

To be clear, any breathing method that emphasizes increased diaphragmatic excursion—including so-called “belly breathing”—fails to achieve this. If the abdominals are more-or-less relaxed on inhalation as the diaphragm contracts—descends—the viscera are displaced downward and forward, leaving the rib cage relatively inert. It is only through the antagonistic action of the diaphragm’s contraction over the fulcrum of the viscera, as transmitted hydraulically against a dynamically stabilized lower abdominal wall, that the rib cage is lifted, thus creating the due expansion that Alexander described. It is important to note that in BPP solely for gaseous exchange, the exhalation is mainly vegetative or passive, i.e., the effort at the end of inhalation is relaxed such that the contraction of the rib cage is effected mainly by gravity and the elastic recoil of the lung. Obviously, for the multifarious applications in humankind of breath management for performance (including Whispered Ah), opinion and instruction abound.

It is inconceivable that Alexander did not carry his early and impassioned respiratory work forward into his evolving practice-theory of Use. Strange too that none of his principal followers—Tasker, Barstow, Westfeldt, Wielopolska, Macdonald, Carrington, the Barlows, Jones—seem to have picked up on and continued this line of teaching, as evidenced at least by their own published work and pronouncements and that of their successors. Perhaps they, and even Alexander himself, were overly-reliant on the Primary Control that promised a singular solution to the complex problem of posturality. And thus has it apparently continued through the generations of Alexander teachers.

In any case, with BPP there is now a reliable, if challenging, framework that brings this essential dimension of Alexandrian Use back into focus, in a superlative approach to the conscious cultivation of a posturality that unifies the inner movements of breathing and the outer ones of both being and doing. “Who have ears to hear, let them hear.” The table is set and the meal laid; we are invited to partake, and thereby to become *Alexandrians in Full*.

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Ron Dennis, Ed.D., since 1990 based in Atlanta, trained and certified in 1979 under Judith Leibowitz at the American Center in New York. His career comprises—in addition to teaching—membership, service, and leadership in ACAT-NY and NASTAT/AmSAT. Author (2013) of *The Posturality of the Person: A Guide to Postural Education and Therapy* and of *Alexander Revisited: Contemplation and Criticism 1979-2014*, in his writing of more than 45 years he has striven to clarify the conceptual foundations of the Technique and to illuminate the coordinational implications and requirements of “a satisfactory use of the self” as realized by F. M. Alexander. Information about BPP certification is available from rondennis@joimail.com.

Reflections and FM Alexander's Australian Years Part 2, 1889 – 1896

BY ROSSLYN MCLEOD



Mirror, mirror on the wall,
Tell me truly, tell me all,
What thou seest is it right,
Is this apparition such a sight ?

Please don't let me wander astray,
Be honest in thy comments, pray,
I know my being needs some remoulding,
Will it require much scaffolding?

Thou art so wise in thy observance
Of wayward humans' wayward dance,
Guide me in new realms of existence,
E'en thou it take much persistence.

Lead me out of this dreamlike trance
To the promised land, where stance
And uprightness of mind
Are virtues so clearly defined.

On my bended knees I implore thee
To release me from bondage of perfidy,
So that thoughts creating ungainly contortions
Cease, thus allowing bewitching proportions.

To express what thou desirest
Choose words not spoken in jest;
For my heart's sole ambition
Is to change my appalling condition.

I wait with bated breath for thy reply,
Yet catch I only sound of mournful sigh,
Thy answer please do not delay in giving,
If thou wouldst have me go on living.

Silently thou gazeth out on me,
Glassy-eyed, reflecting on eternally,
Waiting for the clamor of the human tide
To be still and all ferment subside.

All what's needed for unsealing
Human shapes from webs of intrigue,
That keep them in the devil's league.

"While ye mortals blunder along
Caught in perpetual theories wrong,
There can be no meaningful phrase
To free you from your mental maze.

"You must awake to the proposition
Of being ever watchful for traps of condition
That stem from trusting head's false
inclinations,
Brought on by surfeit of intellectualisations.

"The beguiling path of over-verbacity
Is a barrier to real simplicity,
Be ready for constant adjustments of course
To balance the pull of opposing force.

"Now comes my hour to rest from reflections
On mankind's 'orrible, 'orful defections,
I need a break from this arduous task

Of framing each human mask.

"During the coming weeks of holiday jinks
Which could bring unwanted twists and kinks,
There may be occasion you need a guide
For temporary repairs to your wayward
backside.

"Thus for mirror image advice in verse
You'll have to look for a substitute nurse,
Or outwardly lean less heavily
And strengthen supreme self-sufficiency.

Now ere the strain of diagnosis of so many
human backs
Spoils my complexion and develops a few
cracks,

Tis time to draw my curtain, or turn me to the
wall
But first, always UP is my blessing to you all."

Reflections and FM Alexander's Australian Years Part 2, 1889 – 1896

BY ROSSLYN MCLEOD



Introduction

Information about FM Alexander's Australian years (1869-1904) can be found from four main sources, in chronological order they are:

- FM Alexander's unpublished autobiography written in London in the 1940's, more than forty years after he had left Australia; referred to in my article about Alexander's Australian years (1869-1889), Part 1 published in *The Exchange* January 2026. This autobiography is printed in full in my book *Up From Down Under; the Australian Origins of Frederick Matthias Alexander and the Alexander Technique*. 4th Edition, publisher Mouritz.
- *Up From Down Under; the Australian Origins of Frederick Matthias Alexander and the Alexander Technique* by Rosslyn McLeod. First printed in Australia in 1994 in time for the 4th World Alexander Congress held in Sydney in July of that year. 2nd edition edited and published by Jean Fischer in the UK for STAT books. 3rd edition self-published in Australia in 1995.

4th edition revised and enlarged by Jean Fischer to include as Appendix: FM's autobiography; list of poems and speeches FM recited; eight of these printed in full; 1902 Prospectus for the Sydney Dramatic and Operatic Conservatorium that FM wanted to establish with reference to the Delsarte System. This 4th edition of my book was published by Mouritz in 2017.

Whilst I was living in Melbourne (1986-96) the development of my book grew from ideas I had about doing research into Alexander's Australian years, begun in 1986 and continuing for about eight years. I wanted to describe Australian society when Alexander lived here (1869-1904) and to give some detail about the lives of people associated with Alexander.

- *Frederick Matthias Alexander: A Family History* by J. A. Evans. Jackie Evans was a great-niece of FM Alexander and published her book in 2001 through Phillimore & Co, UK. There is extensive detail about the Alexander family using much family history source material. The book is in three sections; F M Alexander's Ancestry, his life in Australia and New Zealand, then life in England, including the prolonged trips to America.
- *F M: The Life of Frederick Matthias Alexander: Founder of the Alexander Technique* by Michael Bloch and published in 2004 by Little, Brown. When Michael was writing his book he had not, at that stage, visited Australia so for the first part of his book– chapters one and two about Alexander's Australian years– he used a number of quotes from my book, with kind acknowledgement. In October 2004, Michael did visit Australia, he spent a few days in Adelaide

(where I live) and we enjoyed a very pleasant afternoon talking, amongst other topics, about Alexander research. Michael gave me a copy of his Alexander biography, in the front he wrote the inscription with reference to me as a “Pioneer researcher into the life of FM.”

For anyone interested in Alexander’s formative years in Australia and the general changes and developments taking place in this country the above four sources provide a comprehensive coverage. Is there still more material to be discovered about FM’s Australian years? Of course.

I enjoyed reading the book *The Philosopher’s Stone* edited by Jean Fischer with several first hand diary accounts of lessons with FM in England, after he was well-established in his teaching there. I have wondered if there is still any material around here in Australia, diaries or notes by those people who had Elocution lessons with FM, hidden away in family boxes? As time passes there is less and less likelihood of this material surviving. However FM did have a wide variety of pupils here, many with prominent positions in society, so maybe interesting discovery is still possible.

Much research today is done via the computer; the web certainly offers possibilities for new information, mainly from the now digitalised copies of old newspapers. However it is the field work that most often yields significant finds so tracking down the descendants of all those FM pupils here is likely to be where discoveries will be made.

My research, while I was living in Melbourne from 1986 to 1996 (no computer then), consisted of perusing endless microfiche of old newspapers, plus occasionally the thrill of actually turning the then fragile pages of old newspapers – of course while wearing the white gloves that were provided. Official government records were another good source of information but best of all was the excitement of meeting people whose relatives had been associated with FM and being provided with a few gems of source material that I never thought would come my way.

Before detailing FM’s Australian years of voice work and elocution teaching, this is Part 2, 1889-1896, I will first give a general summary of public entertainment, drama, elocution recitals, with consideration of the accents of voices, especially the Australian colonial ‘twang’ of those times.

The Australian colonial accent was a mixture of various English dialects that emerged from the early settlement of Australia by people mainly from Britain, beginning in 1788. The fact that Aboriginal people of many tribes had been living in this land for at least 65,000 years is still being explored by today’s Australians and slowly there is greater understanding of this country’s long history of human habitation. Still, for my purposes, the English settlement period was significant to the establishment of accents. During the 1800’s, as there were more Australian-born children than immigrants, a distinct national dialect was established. Slight variation in accent depended on which part of the country you lived in.

There was growing awareness of this colonial mode of speech, sometimes referred to as Australian ‘twang’, and an increasing desire to develop strategies to modify or even get rid of this manner of speaking. By the late 1800’s, elocution teachers were much sought after, particularly by those

in professions where public speaking was a necessity. In the schools, the study of elocution was treated as a regular subject. In *Up From Down Under*, a quote from “a Speech Day Report of 1902 Miss Morris, the Headmistress of Melbourne Church of England Girls’ Grammar School, a leading girls school in Melbourne, noted that the examiner in elocution,

“approved particularly of the reading of the juniors and noticed a commendable absence of that very common and disagreeable colonial twang which is usual amongst the young people of the State.”

So the public speakers – lawyers, clergy, politicians – took elocution lessons but so also did a number of other people who were hoping to become professional Reciters.

In 1894 a young English elocutionist arrived to live in Sydney. In an extensive interview with the Daily Telegraph and referenced in *Up from Down Under*, Mr. Lawrence Campbell stated,

“There are two sides to every question and there are two sides to elocution. There is the mechanical side involving a study of articulation, enunciation, emphasis, and grammatical pauses; and there is the sentimental side, implying considerations of tone, pitch, inflection, rhetorical pauses, facial expression and gesture.” Later he continued, “Elocution on the platform is one thing and elocution on the stage quite another thing, the result being that very few actors make good elocutionists and very few elocutionists good actors. The actor is accustomed to rely, to a large extent, upon stage accessories, whilst the elocutionist gets into the habit of creating both the characters whom he is supposed to be addressing when not speaking directly to the audience and the scenes associated with the piece he has in hand.”

When asked about the Australian pronunciation, Mr Campbell expressed an unnatural horror. He said, “He did not think the affliction incapable of cure, and said that during the course of some months spent in Tasmania in search of health after the fatigues of professional work during a severe English winter, he succeeded in affecting a marked improvement in the speech of a class of girls at the Ladies’ School, Launceston .” This interview was reprinted in the North West Post, Devonport (a town on the north west coast of Tasmania) July 28th, 1894 (referenced in *Up from Down Under*).

When FM Alexander made the big decision to leave Tasmania in 1889 and pursue an acting career in Melbourne, he was leaving behind the financial security of full time work as a junior accountant in Waratah for the Mt Bischoff Tin Mine. FM notes (in his autobiography) that when he first gave the necessary notice of resignation to the Mine Manager, Mr. HWF Kayser, he refused to accept it and asked FM to think seriously about such a momentous decision with no definite prospects of future financial security. However the twenty year old Alexander wanted a wider scope of activity to explore the fields of the arts and education. Melbourne, at that time, was Australia’s largest and most prosperous city, thanks to the amazing amount of gold discoveries in Victoria since the 1850’s; it was known as Marvellous Melbourne.

Melbourne in the 1890’s offered a wide variety of public entertainment, there were many fine theatres and much coming and going of the ‘star’ performers between England, America, and

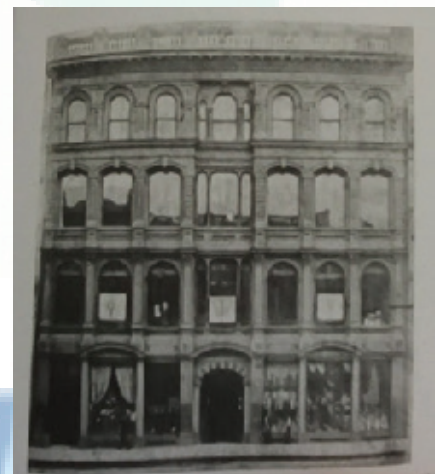
Australia. As well as the big shows like opera and plays there was a range of entertainment on a smaller scale; pantomime, burlesque, circus, and the Elocution Recital where music and poetry were on the same program.

In an article titled *Public Declamation* in the May 12th, 1893 issue of *Table Talk* (a very informative Melbourne magazine about the Arts), the author Frances Tyrell-Gill stated,

“The practice of recitation is fast becoming as notable a feature of our modern life as the practice of music. Not only at the celebrations of the different schools of elocution, but both in public and private, the University Conversazione, the Artists’ evening, the drawing room at home, recitation, equally with music, forms an indispensable part of the entertainment...Fashion has just now decreed that music and recitation shall form a large part of her social entertainment. Everyone is supposed to either play or recite. And the plentitude of instructors, with or without qualifications, may be looked upon simply as the supply created by the demand. In some instances there will be the cultured artist, trained and prepared for his work, and who will seek for love of art to awaken a kindred love in his pupil; but who can doubt that in the majority of instances the teacher will look upon his work as mere means to an end; will aim himself at being popular; and instead of endeavouring to awaken this true feeling for art, will inflate his pupils with the idea of making the whole matter a successful show. In short, he regards it from the monetary point of view only.”

1889 – 1894

FM Alexander arrived in Melbourne in 1889 and was to experience much of the artistic – elocution world outlined above. At first he attended many performances, including those by the famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt; then there was the need to start earning some money so he took on a variety of office jobs and began his own serious voice study; as he developed repertoire he took part in acting engagements as they came along. He was troubled on and off by voice and breathing problems which began to interfere with his onstage work. Temporary relief was sometimes obtained from following advice from doctors and voice specialists. One instance was when FM’s doctor, Dr Charles Bage suggested he move from Melbourne to the seaside town of Geelong to stay for some time. This he did.



(Figure 1: Image of Georges, a high-end department store where FM Alexander worked. Image taken from my book.)

In the early 1890s, tuberculosis (TB) or *consumption* as it was sometimes called, was quite prevalent due to poor sanitation in Melbourne; this was only really solved when in the mid 1890’s a new large sanitation system was installed for the whole city and Melbourne air quality improved markedly. In fact, because there was no proper sewerage system, an appalling stench wafted from the open drains. Ignorance and neglect of the hygienic disposal of human waste had devastating results on human health. In 1891 plans began and work started for a proper underground

drainage system, completed by 1897. As comments from the opening ceremony for the completed underground system in 1897 tell us 'those puny punsters and petty wits who spoke of Melbourne as Marvellous Smellbourne would be constrained to speak of her as one of the sweetest and healthiest cities of the world.' The citizens of Melbourne now had decent air quality.

So for FM to go to live in a seaside town for a few months, away from the Melbourne stench, would certainly help improve his breathing, but not be a long term solution. Of course, basically it was HOW FM was using his whole body, particularly the head /neck area, that was the root cause of his voice/breathing problems. The experiments FM did over a period of time to solve his problems and then being able to resume his acting career are well described, by him in his book *the Use Of the Self* Chapter One, and later on by many others. In this article I will pay attention to those people who came into his life during his Australian and New Zealand years.

For his voice studies, there were plenty of teachers to choose from. We know in FM's book *The Use of the Self* Chapter One, there is mention of Mr. James Cathcart, a well known actor who later appeared with FM at some of the recitals he organised. Information about FM's main voice teacher in Melbourne and the other influences on his vocal development is best gauged from articles FM later wrote for two newspapers; the articles are from Hobart Mercury, July 9, 1894, titled *Elocution As An Accomplishment*, and from the *Auckland Star* July 20, 1895, titled *Speech Culture and Natural Elocution*. Both these articles are quoted extensively in my book *Up From Down Under; the Australian Origins of Frederick Matthias Alexander and the Alexander Technique*.

It would seem FM's main voice teacher in Melbourne was Mr. Frederick Wyndham Hill (1861-1936), whose father was the elocution teacher Thomas Padmore Hill (TP Hill; 1820-1879). British born, TP Hill's early career as a journalist took him to Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope then in the early 1850's he came to Australia, eventually settling in Melbourne in 1858, this was his main place of residence until his death in 1879. TP Hill's chief occupation was as a teacher of elocution at a number of schools, but he also travelled widely in Australia to teach this subject. His book *The Oratorical Trainer* (available online via the National Library of Australia) became a widely known text book on this subject for many years. FM quotes from it in his own elocution articles.



(Figure 2: Diagrams within the *Oratorical Trainer*, Author: Thomas Padmore Hill)

Also in these early articles written by FM are quotes from British Professor of Elocution, Charles Hartley (1865-1935), as well as Lennox Browne (1841-1902) and Emil Behnke (1836-1892). Lennox Browne was an eminent throat surgeon in London and Emil Behnke was a lecturer on voice physiology and voice production. Their book *Voice, Song, and Speech* first published in 1883 had extensive circulation for many years. FM obviously knew this book in detail as he quotes liberally from it in his elocution articles. I have a copy of the 1890 edition of this book, which FM would have been familiar with – it is 248 pages with extensive anatomical detail, much comment about the speaking voice, and practical pronunciation exercises.

Emil Behnke's obituary in the Times (UK), 1892, included

Emil Behnke was very successful in the application of scientific principles to the practical work of the teaching of singing, and more particularly to the restoration of voices impaired by false training, that he may be said to have established an entirely new profession, and he was universally accepted as a leading authority on all matters relating to the voice. He worked in co-operation with leading medical specialists.



(Figure 3: Emil Behnke)

Emil Behnke grew up in Germany, he was an opera singer there then went to England in 1865, at first teaching piano in local schools. One young pupil remembered, 'when I was over-anxious lest my fingers should drop on the wrong keys, Herr Behnke would say "Never mind the notes, keep time!" His wife, Mrs Emil Behnke, was also an experienced voice teacher, her article *Some Defects of Voice and Speech in Children* (1893/94) is still of interest today, and includes detail regarding stammering and stuttering defects.

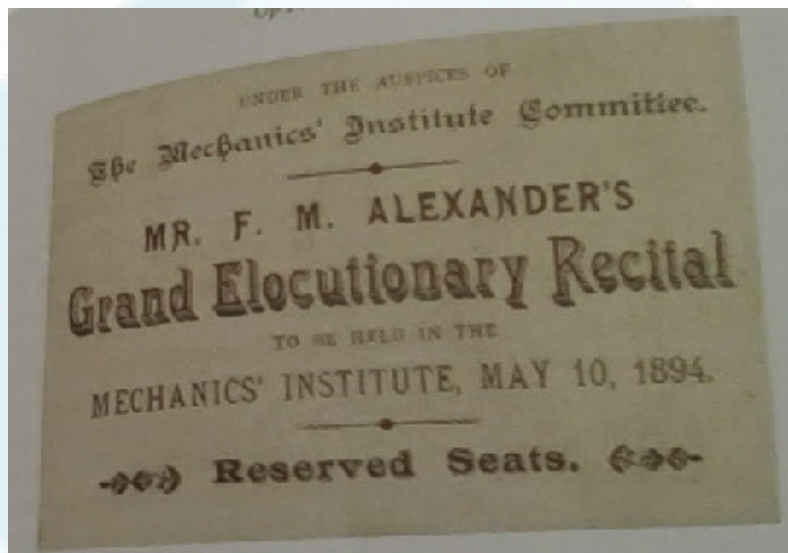
Emil Behnke published books of Voice Training Exercises, a group of six of these in conjunction with Charles Pearce from Trinity College of Music, London. Each book is for one particular class of voice, tailored for that voice type, as each voice type has differences in respective mechanisms. I have been able to find a copy of one of these, for the Tenor voice. Resonance exercises start with repeating rapidly the syllable koo as "...a stiff attitude is prevented, and the throat assumes a natural and open position."

As well as study, FM was developing material for his own elocution recitals, these in conjunction with other performers, mainly musicians. With his voice problems well on the way to being solved and growing experience of presenting recitals, FM felt confident he could think seriously of a professional stage career. He decided to return home to Tasmania for this next step in fulfilling his ambition to be an actor.

1894 Tasmania

FM Alexander started his series of recitations in the island colony at his home town of Wynyard, then Waratah, where he had previously worked as a junior accountant. Next along the coast to Launceston, a larger town, where he stayed a while to give both recitals and teach elocution. Here his first recital was previewed by the *Launceston Examiner* (May 7th, 1894), including the following,

Mr Alexander was a pupil of Mr F. Hill (Melbourne), and carried off first prize in a recent elocutionary competition in Melbourne. His tutor is a son of the late TP Hill, author of that well known work Hill's Oratorical Trainer, and probably the best teacher of elocution we have had in Australia. On Thursday evening, Mr Alexander will present to his audience the choicest selections from his extensive repertoire, the majority of the items being new to Launcestonians. He will be assisted by several of our best known musicians, and altogether an enjoyable programme may be looked forward to.



(Figure 4: Ticket for Launceston Mechanic's Institute, May 10th, 1894. Image taken from my book.)

Several weeks later on June 29, 1894, FM gave a recital in the Hobart Town Hall; other performers on that programme included Mr and Mrs R. Young. Both these people were to be associated with FM in performance and teaching in subsequent years. The critique for this performance appeared in *The Mercury* on June 30 and included the following,

Mr Alexander well established himself in public favour, judging from the enthusiastic applause accorded him. He proved his elocutionary ability to be of a high order, and showed himself capable of dealing with any subject – grave or gay, tragic or comic...Mr Alexander was ably assisted by Mrs R. Young in the quarrel scene from the School for Scandal, and Miss E. Miller in a selection from Tobin's comedy, The Honeymoon. Both ladies exhibited considerable dramatic ability, and were accorded flattering approval... Mr R. Young revived his merry acquaintanceship with the Hobart public in Grossmith's sketch, 'The silver wedding,' and his return was greeted with manifest approval. He filled the audience with unmeasured merriment throughout his performance.

On July 9, 1894, *The Mercury* published the extensive article by Alexander titled *Elocution As An Accomplishment*, already detailed above. At this time, New Zealand was very much part of the touring circuit followed by both overseas and local artists. Shipping was frequent between Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, and New Zealand ports. FM had a friend in Christchurch, New Zealand who assured him that a recital tour in New Zealand would have a good chance of success, so going there was a natural progression.

1895 New Zealand

As with the Tasmanian sojourn, in New Zealand FM gave both recitations and taught; in his advertisements he was very specific, stating in *The Lyttelton Times*, Christchurch March 20, 1895 that, 'Mr Alexander does NOT teach Elocution but Natural Elocution, the system adopted by CS Hartley, Professor of Natural Elocution, London, Cambridge and Oxford.' His recitations, according to local press, were received with 'wild' enthusiasm.

FM gave further recitals and taught in Wellington, Napier, then arrived in Auckland where he had many worthwhile opportunities to develop both his acting and teaching careers. Lecture tours were part of the entertainment scene at this time. While FM was in Auckland for his six month stay, high profile visitors included the actor Walter Bentley (1849-1927). Back in Melbourne in December 1891, FM had attended the Theatre Royal to see Walter Bentley in the lead role of Mathias the Burgomaster in the powerful melodrama, *The Bells or the Murder of the Polish Jew*. After witnessing this performance, FM went home and wrote the poem, *The Dream of Matthias the Burgomaster*, this was said to be well adapted for recitation and possessing considerable literary merit. FM recited it on a number of occasions.

Walter Bentley had a fascinating and adventurous life. He was born and educated in Edinburgh, Scotland. He arrived in Australia in 1867, worked as a rouseabout on a cattle station in Queensland; in 1871 he went to New Zealand, later Melbourne for a short time, then in 1874 went to England with the sole purpose of becoming an actor. He obtained small parts, then for three and a half years he was with prominent actor Henry Irving (1838-1905), becoming his juvenile lead. (Irving later became Sir Henry Irving) After this, Bentley did some other stage work, then became dissatisfied and decided he needed time for further study.



(Figure 5: Walter Bentley. The caption below the image reads: "MR. WALTER BENTLEY, TRAGEDIAN—FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY THE VANDYCK STUDIO".)

In a long interview he gave for *The Theatre Magazine*, (Sydney), October 1, 1917, Walter Bentley described his *Studies in the Highlands*: 'I cancelled all my engagements. I went into the Highlands to a shooting box lent to me by Bailie, of Douchflour, near Inverness, and there, worked hard for six months. My study took the form of inquiry into the principles of elocution and the principles of gesture.' This whole interview is a fascinating account of the art of elocution and the art of gesture at that time.

Walter Bentley then returned to the stage, performing leading roles in Shakespeare and other plays in England and America. He toured Australia in 1891, he continued travelling then in 1909 until his death in 1927 he lived in Sydney. Ill health dominated the last years of Walter Bentley's life, and he chose release from this by a bullet, published by a Sydney newspaper: 'Even in his private life Walter Bentley, known in the profession as "the Scotch Hamlet" carried an air of thespian tragedy. It was a real tragedy that brought down the final curtain.'

Over the years, the paths of Walter Bentley and FM would probably have crossed a number of times, so now in 1895 Auckland, there would have been exchange of ideas and experience. On June 6, FM performed at the Auckland City Hall; on June 7, Walter Bentley gave a lecture at the Opera house, titled 'The Passion Play' illustrated by beautiful pictures. It was stated in an advertisement, 'this marvellous exhibition of the Life and Death of Jesus Christ has been viewed by crowded audiences in all the southern cities, who have been highly delighted.' At this time, Walter Bentley no doubt would have spoken to FM of his London experience of the 1870's when he played the juvenile lead for Henry Irving; then, it was just ten years later in 1905 that FM was in London, and among his pupils was H. B. Irving (1870-1919), son of actor Sir Henry Irving with whom Walter Bentley had been associated with in England. Life has strange twists!

Two other prominent visitors to Auckland at this time were Professor Loiset, a memory expert, and Frederic Villiers, a war correspondent. Both men had some elocution lessons from FM Alexander and wrote suitable eulogies in appreciation. FM's stay in New Zealand was drawing to a close and a Farewell Recital was given on November 20, 1895 at the Auckland City Hall. During the interval, His Worship the Mayor, Mr JJ Holland, on behalf of Mr Alexander's pupils, presented him with a handsome illuminated address. This leatherbound, coloured calligraphy testimonial is still in the Alexander family and is reproduced in colour in my book *Up From Down Under; the Australian Origins of Frederick Matthias Alexander and the Alexander Technique*, by permission of the Estate of F M Alexander. It is a beautiful piece of work with a coat of arms, pictures of Auckland, appreciative text regarding lessons received from FM, and the signatures for thirty six of his grateful pupils.

Now it was time for FM to return to Australia, he chose Melbourne, for a number of reasons including family circumstances.

This is the end of part 2 of the FM Alexander article instalments, where FM Alexander arrived in Melbourne in 1896. The next instalment covers the years 1896 until he left for England in 1904.

Supplement:

In my article about FM's formative years in Tasmania from birth 1869 until he reached 20 years of age, printed in the *ExChange* December 2025, there was reference to the town of Waratah.

Waratah is south of the coastal town of Wynyard.

I am giving more detail about Waratah because of a recent 2-part TV documentary by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), there is a weekly program titled *Australian Story*. On April 13th and 20th 2026 there was a documentary titled, *Lost/ Celine Cremer*.

This documentary is about a young Belgian woman who came to Australia in 2022 on a working holiday. In 2023, she moved to Tasmania. In June, she hired a car and drove up the West Coast of Tasmania, stopping at a local store in Waratah to buy food, before driving to a nearby tourist attraction. She walked 1km to the Philosopher's Falls. Celine Cremer was never seen again.



(Figure 6: Modern Day Waratah; Image of Waratah Falls; Source: www.northwesttasmania.com.au)

Some days later, Celine's friends notified the police of her lack of contact. They searched the area and found nothing. Celine's friends gathered support and in December 2025, 30 experienced bushwalkers searched the area. A few clues were found in bushland, away from the marked track, indicating that Celine had left the main track to explore and had gotten lost in the dense bush. Later, following this expedition, one of the experienced bushwalkers continued to search the area. And on January 28th 2026, whilst on a solo expedition, the same bushwalker found the remains of Celine Cremer in the Arthur River.

This tragedy shows how even in our modern times, humans can be overwhelmed by dense bushland. This documentary, with its stunning aerial shots of the West Coast of Tasmania shows the mountainous nature of the terrain; the steep slopes leading down to deep gorges covered in dense scrubs; and swift flowing rivers. The natural beauty of this region is still much the same now as it would have been in FM's time (1870's~).

The main difference between then and now is our transportation. Nowadays there are good bitumen roads through wilderness areas. This can be deceptive. It is so easy travelling by car, but to venture on foot into dense forest is another matter entirely. When FM needed to travel from his hometown of Wynyard on the Coast to inland and mountainous Waratah, a distance of 75 kilometres (47 miles), the journey would have been by horse or horse and cart on very rough tracks - prone to becoming quagmires when there was heavy rain - or by train. (Do not think of comparing our train travel today with that of the 1880's; see below)

When the Mount Bischoff tin mines in Waratah began in the 1870s, the ore had to be transported to Burnie, a seaport near Wynyard. At first, cartage was by bullock teams over rough tracks, then a wooden tramway was built. The gradient from the Coast up into the mountains was steep, 2,000 feet.

(Note: Bullock Teams are a group of draught animals, usually bullocks, or castrated male bulls, harnessed together to pull heavy loads. They formed an important part of Australia's transport system in early colonial days.)

Uncovered trolleys were placed on the wooden rails and pulled along by horses; so passengers and goods were transported between the two towns. This journey could take 7 to 8 hours often in conditions of extreme cold and wet weather. A more efficient system was needed. By 1884, a railway line had been built so the journey between Burnie and Waratah now took 3 and a half hours. The locomotives and carriages bought for this railway line were rejects from the Indian State Railways - so they were cheaper than from other sources! - at least the carriages were more comfortable for the passengers than the uncovered trolleys first used. At the opening of this railway line in 1884 the Chief Agent of the Company that had built the line wrote, "It is not a pleasing sensation on watching a train leaving the station to know that it may be the cause before it returns of getting one imprisoned for manslaughter".

There were no reports of fatal accidents but when FM moved to live in Waratah in 1887 the travel from the Coast to the town of Waratah would have been quite an adventurous journey ! This railway line has long since gone, closure of the Mt Bischoff mine would have forced this to happen.

Watching the documentary *Lost: Celine Cremer* provides a much greater understanding of the type of country in the area of Tasmania that FM grew up in; and how living there for the first 20 years of his life has certainly contributed to the development of his character and outlook on life.

In memory of Celine Cremer (1992 - 2023) and special thanks to all the volunteers and officials involved in the search for Ms. Cremer.



(Figure 7: Mountain ranges in the region of the West Coast and Waratah.)



(Figure 8: Mt. Bischoff Mine Railway)

Link to Documentary:

Part 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3R8jLrtGuA

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8LB57BV5J-g>

References:

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Rosslyn McLeod began her journey as a musician. Whilst playing the viola she developed back problems. Lessons in the Alexander Technique brought great benefit, so she changed career and trained in London then Sydney to become a teacher of the Alexander Technique. While teaching the Alexander Technique at the University of Melbourne and the Victorian College of the Arts School of Music, Rosslyn did extensive research into Alexander's Australian years. This pioneering work resulted in publication of her book, [Up from Down Under: The Australian origins of Frederick Matthias Alexander and the Alexander Technique](#), which led to the subsequent film she wrote, directed, and produced entitled [His Life...His Legacy: Originator of the Alexander Technique](#).

The Grasping Reflex and its Significance for Alexander Technique Practice

BY JOSEPH WEISSENBERG



Bonding, touch, and self-control from a developmental neurological perspective.

The **grasping reflex** (palmar reflex) is one of the earliest sensory-motor patterns in humans. It develops as early as the 10th to 12th week of pregnancy and initially serves as a survival mechanism: When the palm is touched, the fingers automatically close. Between the 3rd and 6th month of life at the latest, it should become integrated and transition into deliberate, differentiated grasping and releasing. This reflex ensures bonding, support, and protection. An automatic stimulus-response pattern becomes a conscious action (Blythe, 2002).

This development is of particular importance for educational work in the Alexander Technique.

Integration and Maturity

Once the grasping reflex has been integrated, the following becomes apparent:

- Purposeful grasping and controlled letting go
- Differentiated hand coordination
- Free use of the hands without unconscious tension
- Ability to make and break contact
- Emotional regulation in situations involving closeness and distance

The hand changes from a reactive organ to a conscious tool for interacting with the world.

Recognizing non-integrated patterns in class

If the grasping reflex remains active or partially active, the following phenomena may occur:

- Excessive holding on or clinging
- Difficulty letting go (physically and emotionally)
- Increased basic tension in the hands, forearms, and shoulder girdle
- Tendency to control

- Insecurity in interpersonal contact
- Touch is experienced as unpleasant or threatening

From a developmental neurological perspective, the nervous system remains organized in a protective or alarm mode. The amygdala dominates the action, and security is established through tension and control. Such protective patterns can become particularly apparent in Alexander Technique work, which relies on subtle touch, contact, and conscious inhibition.

Students then react not only muscularly, but also with withdrawal, inner distance, or over-adaptation (Blythe, 2002).

The overarching control - Higher Regulation: grasping – holding – letting go

When engaging with the world through the full depth of our being and awareness, a single expression can carry so many meanings—because our hands can reach out, receive, hold, release, defend, and comfort. Our hands hold countless possibilities. When we use them merely as tools, we limit ourselves and miss the richness of a truly meaningful life. The grasping reflex is at the center of a fundamental control:

— grasping – holding – letting go.

This dynamic affects not only hand function, but the entire human relationship system – physical, emotional, and social.

Integrated means:

I can make contact.

I can hold it.

I can release it again.

If this maturation is lacking, a “threshold” often arises that cannot be crossed – especially in situations of closeness, touch, or social resonance. Reactions of shame or overwhelm lead to withdrawal. Feeling less seems safer at first.

What is pedagogically relevant here is that it is not the avoidance of feelings that creates integration, but rather the measured, safe re-perception of feelings in a regulated context.

Significance for Alexander Technique teaching

The Alexander Technique promotes awareness, inhibition, and new coordination. But if early protective reflexes remain active, awareness alone reaches its limits. Teachers then might experience/notice that:

- Students become more “aware” but remain tense inside.
- Touch is tolerated, but not really allowed.
- Progress remains unstable.

Here, an understanding of primitive reflexes can be a valuable addition. Only when safety and protective reflexes are regulated from an alarm level to a stable safety level can the nervous system switch from limbic survival mode to cortical control. Then the following emerge:

- Genuine freedom of choice
- Differentiated motor organization
- Deeper self-regulation
- Authentic contact

The principles of the Alexander Technique—non-doing, inhibition, conscious alignment—can only be sustainably embodied on conscious control.

Pedagogical essence when the grasping reflex is integrated:

- Instinct becomes conscious relationship
- Holding on becomes trust
- Protection becomes presence.

For Alexander Technique teaching, this might mean:

Touch is not only a methodological tool, but also a neurobiological dialogue. The more securely the nervous system is organized, the more freely coordination can arise. And thus touch becomes a bridge or conduit between thinking and doing.

Key affirmation for working with students:

“I am allowed to grasp and receive—and I am allowed to let go in safety.”

Alexander Technique teachers and the grasping reflex

If the Alexander Technique teacher has not integrated the grasping reflex, this has a subtle but significant effect on the pedagogical quality of the lessons. In my experience typical effects can include:

- **Unconscious holding on during touch:** The hands “do” more than is intended. Instead of inviting contact, imperceptible guidance or control arises.
- **Difficulty truly letting go:** The teacher remains “attached” to the student internally or manually, which makes it difficult for the student to take responsibility and organize themselves.
- **Ambivalence in proximity-distance situations:** Either too much distance (avoidant contact) or too much proximity (overly engaged accompaniment) arises.
- **Increased basic tension in the hands and shoulder girdle:** This tension is directly transferred to the quality of nonverbal communication.
- **Contact as a technique rather than a relationship:** Touch becomes functional rather than dialogical. Neurobiological exchange remains limited.
- **Covert need for control:** Teaching is geared more toward the “right result” than toward the student’s process.

The pedagogical key point is:

A non-integrated grasping reflex influences the ability to make contact, maintain it, and release it again—in other words, precisely the dynamic that lies at the heart of every Alexander Technique lesson. Only when the teacher themselves can grasp and release freely does touch become a space of safety, freedom of choice, and genuine self-regulation.

Work Cited/References

Blythe, Sally Goddard. *Reflexes: Learning and Behavior: A Window into the Child’s Mind: A Non-invasive Approach to Solving Learning and Behavior Problems*. Fern Ridge Press, 2002.

Watch also Sally Goddard Blythe’s youtube videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwHE2AOKKpeIMdaUG29qBE0pErvDh8EmK>

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An Introduction to NLP for Alexander Teachers Part 2 – The Structure of Thinking



BY DAVID OWEN

I started my last article “An Introduction to NLP for Alexander Teachers Part 1 – Language Patterns” *ExChange* | December 2025, with Lao Tsu’s opening to his [Tao Te Ching](#):¹

“The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao”

It referred to both NLPTM (Neuro-Linguistic Programming™) and the Alexander Technique, pointing out that experiencing both NLP and AT is essential to know what they are. In the last article we looked mostly at the linguistic aspects of NLP: the words we have *told* ourselves and others, and been told by others about experience. This time, we mostly look at the unspoken - *untold* aspects of our thinking and experience... Perhaps not the eternal, but at least the *ancient* structure of thinking, which predates language. In NLP circles, we call these aspects *Submodalities* as they are distinctions within the five representation systems or thinking channels or thinking *Modalities*, based on our five senses.

However, we will start with a roundup of the fundamental principles or theoretical assumptions of NLP, known as the *Presuppositions of NLP*. Then we will look at submodalities. We will also look at various dimensional concepts, which partly come from submodalities and have also been found to be useful for many people.

Presuppositions of NLP

As we discussed in Part 1, a presupposition is something that is pre-supposed: assumed or treated as if it is true. This can be unconscious as an unexamined part of someone’s model of the world, deliberate and disingenuous, or deliberate and offered as a proposition. Richard Bandler and John Grinder, the co-creators of NLP, posed a series of presuppositions of the last sort. They are generally unprovable, though if you act as if they are true, they seem to be useful or self-fulfilling. Some of the main presuppositions are:²

How our minds work

- Experience has a structure. i.e.
- We perceive, remember and imagine according to our five senses.
- So-called 6th senses are expressed in terms of these five: e.g. Clairvoyance – seeing clearly.

Language as a sixth processing channel still represents the five senses.

- We each experience our own Model of the world (See previous article) and:
- The map is not the territory (originally from Alfred Korzybski.) Therefore, we do not perceive the actual world. (This is provable in physics and biology.)

Understanding and communicating with other people

- The positive worth of an individual is held constant; while the value and appropriateness of their internal and/or external behaviour is questioned. (See Logical levels.)
- There is a positive intention motivating every behaviour; and a context in which every behaviour has value. Therefore:
- People are always making the best choices that are available to them at the time.
- We experience other people as part of our own incomplete and inaccurate model of the world, and in communicating with them, we are experiencing and communicating with their own model. Therefore their map or model of the world is actually the territory we have to deal with.
- The meaning of your communication – to the receiver – is indicated by the response you get from them.
- You cannot not communicate. i.e. By withholding communication, you are still communicating. Body language and actions also communicate.

Learning, choice and flexibility

- Memory and imagination share many of the same neurological pathways. Therefore, if you vividly imagine being able to do something, you are likely to be better able to do it.
- Human beings mostly share the same neurology. Therefore, in thinking terms, what is possible for one person is probably possible for another.
- In the context of learning: there is no failure, only feedback. Feedback takes you closer to success.
- If you always do what you have always done, you will always get what you have always got. So if what you are doing is not working, do something different!
- (Or as I say to my pupils, “In order to change, you need to be able to refrain from doing what you would have ordinarily done.” This is one of my definitions of inhibition.)

- Choice is always better than no choice:

No choice means you are dead or in a coma.

One choice means you are stuck.

Two means you are in a dilemma.

Three possibilities is the minimum for choice.

(Note that F.M. Alexander had three choices available once having inhibited his immediate intent to recite: do nothing, do something else, or actually go ahead and recite after all.)

- The individual with the greatest flexibility of thought and behaviour will generally control the outcome of an interaction (after Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety.³) (Note that unfortunately, this can be trumped by whoever is willing to be most unreasonable, which in turn can be trumped by whoever is willing to be most unreasonably reasonable – a high level of flexibility. See 'Win-Win or No-Deal'.)
- It is easier to change your own behaviour than other people's.
(Though in my experience, other people's behaviour often changes as a result of changing our own behaviour, or even as a result of changing our own thinking!)

Submodalities

Richard Bandler seems to have been the first person to deduce that these differences in how we think within each of our five senses, make such a significant difference to us, our thinking, our emotions and our actions. He claims he was working with psychiatrists who wanted to find out how phobias work. He, however, wanted to find out how people had gotten over them!

He advertised in the paper, offering a reward for people who had formerly had a raging phobia, but had somehow gotten over it. He asked his respondents how they had gotten over the phobia, and almost all of them, while stretching out their left palm, as if pushing something away, said something like:

“I looked at myself and laughed, as I saw how ridiculous it was!”

So Bandler would ask them what they were doing with their left hand and they would say:



“Well this probably sounds stupid, but I was pushing the picture of the memory away.”

As you may recognise from my first article “Using NLP and Positive Reinforcement to Teach the Alexander Technique” ExChange | May 2025, this indicated that the respondents disassociated and therefore disconnected themselves from the emotions of the phobia. If you have not read that article yet, try the following experiment:

Remember a time when you felt wonderful.

Remember it as if you are back in the memory, seeing what you saw at the time.

Notice that this brings back a lot of the good feelings of this time.

Now ‘step out’ of the memory and remember it as if you are looking at yourself from some distance outside at that time.

Notice how the feelings associated with that memory are now a lot less.

It is the same visual memory, but seen differently in your mind’s eye. By changing how we see, hear and feel things internally, we can change our mood and increase mental functionality.

We are usually unaware of these patterns. Examples are whether we imagine something close or far away, clearly or vaguely, darkly or brightly or normal brightness etc. Some differences are distinct or ‘Digital’ such as remembered or created, whether you are associated, disassociated, or associated as someone else (first, third and second position.) Others are variable or ‘Analogue’ such as distance, brightness, etc. Some are a mixture such as normal volume being fixed, but louder or quieter being variable. There are submodalities in each of the representation systems.

Visual

- Remembered or imagined (created.)
- First, second or third position.
- Still or if moving, slower, normal or fast speed.
- Colour or black and white, colour effects such as sepia, or variations from pastel through to overly vivid colour.
- Location of image: distance and angle left, centre or right – down, level or up. Also above, below, left or right, or somewhere behind – all being out of normal vision.
- Size of image: Normal, larger or smaller.

- Brightness: Normal, duller or brighter.
- Clarity: Normal, soft or fuzzy, extra sharp.
- Opaque or varying degrees of transparency.
- Panoramic or constrained, either with a fuzzy or sharp edge, or even some sort of frame.
- If not panoramic, what is the outline shape of the image? Oblong, polygon, circular or oval?

Auditory

- Remembered or created.
- First, second or third position.
- Normal, quieter or louder volume.
- Normal, fast or slow speed.
- Soft, normal or sharp clarity.
- Pitch: normal, lower or higher.
- Tone: soft or mellow, natural or neutral, sharp or harsh – especially with voice tone.
- Location of sound: distance and angle left, centre or right, down, level or up, somewhere behind, or even inside one's head– and if so, where?

Kinaesthetic

- Physical, as distinct from emotional sensations
- Associated or disassociated. I.e. Do you sense it as if in someone else or in yourself as you look at yourself from a distance?
- Location in your body.
- Intensity.
- Movement, especially for emotional sensations: Rotating, oscillating, travelling through your body, looping back to the start.
- Remembered sensation, imagined sensation, imagining what an object or person would feel like to touch, internal or surface sensation.

- Quality of emotional sensation: Hot, warm, cold, pressure, suction/emptiness, roughness, smoothness, sharpness, ache, nausea, calmness etc.

Olfactory & Gustatory

- Remembered or created.
- Intensity, duration.
- Perceived location of aroma.
- N. B. The different tastes or smells are the content of the senses, rather than submodalities.

Combination Submodalities

These are where all of the senses change together, though sensations, including emotions, plus taste and smell tend to actually disappear when we are disassociated:

- Remembered or created.
- First, second, or third positions.

Impact of Submodalities

The more realistic a memory or imagined event is, the more real it seems to be. Increasing the distance and reducing the intensity of sound and image, tends to reduce the feelings associated with the subject. Conversely, close, and clear images and loud sounds increase our response.

Our emotional response will depend on context. Unwanted expected events, vivid, large and close or 'in your face' and slightly to the right for a right-handed person, will be distressing and make you want to hold back! The same image at a comfortable distance looking a bit vague, allows you to notice possible dangers and still be resourceful and work out ways to deal with the possibility or avoid it.

Likewise, living in regrets, where someone is associated into a regrettable memory, disables and disempowers the person. Whereas, stepping out of the regrets and either pushing them away to the left, or stepping back from them far enough to get a sense of perspective, helps a person to see that the event is over, be able to learn from experience and imagine how they would have dealt with it or avoided it, if they had possessed the wisdom and resourcefulness they do now, and therefore mentally prepare themselves to deal far better, with any similar situation that might arise in the future.

Motivation

To motivate yourself:

Boldly imagining how good you are going to feel having completed an onerous task.

Place the image of feeling good, just beyond completing the task, and just beyond your reach on your future side!



It makes you want to get moving and complete the task to get to the satisfaction.

Language Submodalities

Here we need to distinguish between the linguistic structure of language as discussed in the Meta and Milton Models – and the auditory or tonal distinctions, which often affect us more deeply. They affect us differently when we hear someone else, compared to our own self-talk. The quality of our self-talk then influences how we talk to others.

Tonal qualities to be aware of are:

- Soft or mellow, neutral, or sharp or harsh.
- Volume and volume variation and emphasis.
- Pitch and pitch variation or intonation.
- Pace or speed and speed variations for emphasis.

In my own mind, I aim to have positive tone, mostly just calm, though a lilting tone of curiosity helps to make me more resourceful. Enthusiasm and excitement tend to come naturally. However, if I catch myself worrying or being grumpy, I can raise the note of my internal voice as if I am questioning “Whats this about?” and then lower the note, as if I am curious. This usually gets me out of being stuck and opens my mind to greater possibilities.

The location of your thinking voice makes a difference. One trick with a critical self-voice is to imagine that it hops out of your head onto your shoulder, then down onto your hand in front of you as if you were inviting a bird to land on it, and then give it a comical voice like Donald Duck or Tweety



Bird from the cartoons. Notice if you can still feel inferior or unresourceful when it sounds that way, or not.

Notice if a critical self-voice is similar to a critical person you have known. Again have it relocate on your hand in front of you, and recognise it for what it is – part of your own neurology trying to be helpful, though accidentally making you feel unresourceful in the process. Negotiate with it and ask what voice it could use to point out potential problems, while keeping you resourceful.

On a different *note*, I like to keep a pleasant tune in my head. However, if you have an unwanted song or tune stuck in your mind, find one that you prefer that inspires, motivates, or that soothes you instead. Stick with the new one for a while and the old one will tend to go away. If it comes back, just repeat the process, or maybe find an even better tune or song. It seems as if our brains think we want more of what we pay most attention to. By disliking a song or melody, we are paying a lot of attention to it, and our brains do not distinguish this from not liking it. We need to substitute with something that grabs our attention or makes us feel good. The same goes for unpleasant thoughts, though these are sometimes wanting our attention to resolve something.

When teaching, I go into, and have my voice tone match the state that I want in my pupil: calm and gentle if I want them to relax, calm and reassuring if I want them to trust their natural coordination, strong and firm if I want them to have strong direction etc.

Dimensional

1st, 2nd, & 3rd Positions

First Position

This is being associated, thinking from your own perspective, either

Remembered

In the present

Hypothetically, e.g. imagining yourself in a story

In the future. We call this *Future or Pseudo orientation in time*. (See Timelines.)

This is being present. We need to be fully embodied to savour the richness of life– both the wonderful and the not so wonderful. In the Jewish Passover meal, one eats the bitter fruits with the sweet– and appreciates the sweet all the better for it!

Third Position

This is disassociation, or looking at yourself and your situation from outside, either in the past, the future or in the present. As James Joyce wrote in *Dubliners* (1917 pp. 133-4):

“Mr. James Duffy... lived at a little distance from his body...”

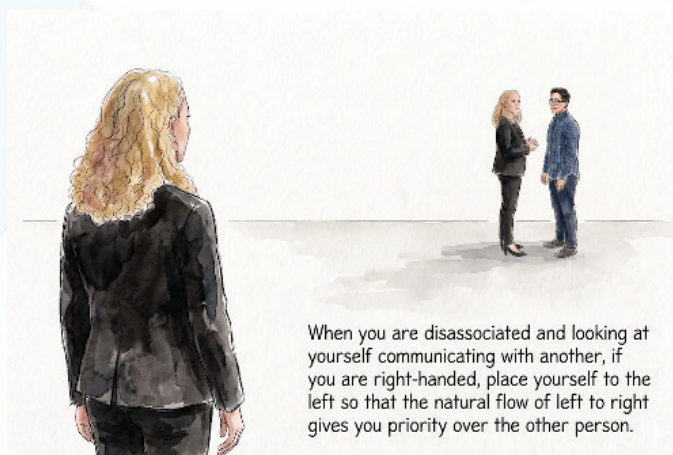
Mr Duffy in the story was an unemotional bureaucrat. Disassociation, even in the present, is an efficient way of not feeling emotions. By distancing yourself from bad memories or unwanted future possibilities, you calm your brain so that it is more resourceful. You can see what you might have done better in the past, so you can deal with or avoid anything similar in the future, or even see how to deal with or avoid fresh problems in the future.

To assess situations, you can disassociate horizontally, seeing yourself to the left of anyone else (if you are right handed) to see the personal dynamics.

If there are more than two people, you can ‘rise above’ to get a ‘birds-eye view’ of the situation in your mind’s eye, to see the organisational dynamics. About thirty degrees from horizontal gives you a good mix of personal and organisational dynamics.

Many people who have been through trauma, or have chosen to do things that others do not like to do, will have disassociated in order to avoid unpleasant emotions or, in the case of Mr Duffy, to avoid empathy. In extremes, disassociation manifests as schizophrenia.

Disassociation is not the way to enjoy life... Remember to re-associate once it is appropriate.



This is what a group of people looks like from a 30-degree elevated angle. It allows you to see both one-to-one and group dynamics.

Second Position

Second position is where you imagine what it is like being someone else. We are familiar with the saying “Put yourself in their shoes,” though most of us bring our own preconceptions with us when we try to do this. People often say “If I were in your place I would.....” and we say something that is obvious to us, but may not be either obvious, possible, or appropriate for them.

Second Position Exercise

This technique helps us leave behind our own point of view and take on, to the greatest possible extent, what it may be like for another person. On your own, or as an exercise with others guiding you, mark out three positions or set out chairs and move yourself to the different positions.

Set out three positions 2 to 3 metres or 6 to 10 feet apart:

Sit in your own position, imagine the other person sitting opposite.

Notice their body language, the way they would sit, their movements.

Notice their usual clothing and acknowledge their age and gender.

Notice their head movements and facial expressions—

And notice how they speak, their word choices, sentence construction,

Voice tone, volume, intonation, rhythm and accentuation.

Stand up out of your chair as if you are leaving your identity behind...

As if you are stepping out of an overall or wetsuit.

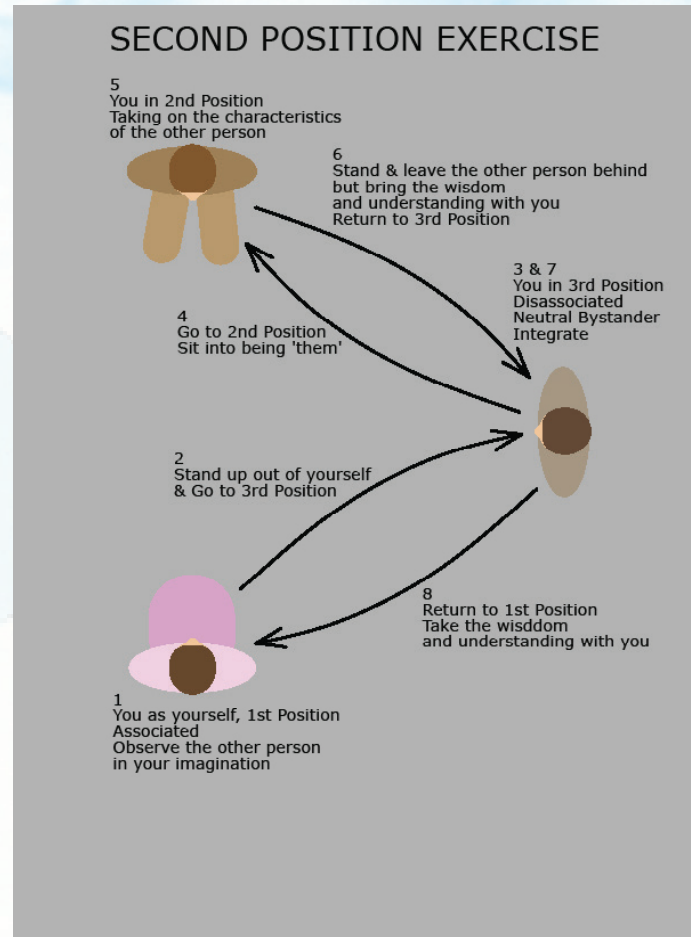
Move over as if you are an independent, neutral observer, to the Third position place. (On the right for most right handed people.)

From here, as this neutral observer, look back in your imagination to your own chair, as if you were still there—

And then look over to the other (2nd) person's place, imagining them there. Again:

Notice their body language, etc,

Their clothing, age and gender –



Their head movements and facial expressions –

And how they speak, word choices, sentence construction –

Voice tone, volume, intonation, rhythm and accentuation.

Now having taken that in as an independent observer –

Move over to the other person's chair –

And as you sit, imagine you are sitting into being them, taking on their personality and identity.

Imagine and notice what it is like:

To have their body and body language, sit the way they sit, feel their movements–

Imagine wearing their clothing and being their age and gender.

Take on their head movements and facial expressions,

And think with their voice and their way of speaking.

Now imagine looking at the world from their eyes, having their observations and opinions.

Look back at your (imagined) self (1st person) from their eyes.

What do you (2nd person) make of that person (1st person) you are looking at?

What would they (1st person) need to do, how would they need to act,

What would they need to say, how, when and where –

For you (2nd person) to sense that that person over there (1st person)

Wants the very best possible Win-Win situation for you, themselves, and anyone else?

Though without compromise– It's got to be *'Win-Win or No Deal!'*

And– If that other (1st person) wanted to get a point across to you, how could they do it without insisting that you (2nd person) agree with them or even have to acknowledge their point?

How could they communicate so that you each get where each other is coming from and can work toward a mutual understanding?

And finally– Is there any particular message or advice you (2nd person) would want to give to that other (1st person) over there, to make things better between you?

Having integrated all the wisdom and understanding from all this,

Quickly and decisively, stand up out of being the other (2nd) person –

Deliberately leaving all the sensations, emotions and sense of identity behind –

Again as if you are standing out of a wetsuit...

And bringing just the learnings, intuitions, wisdom and understanding with you,

Move back to the Third position.

Here you can further integrate as you look back at the second person and then at your imagined First person self,

Then go back to your own seat, and sit back into being fully yourself again, yet having brought all the wisdom and understanding with you.

‘Win-Win or No Deal’

This is the most powerful of four ways of interacting:

Win-Win or No Deal – You are going for the best possible outcome for everyone, but will not compromise your or anyone else’s position. You are willing to walk away from any unfair or unworkable situations.

Lose-Lose – “If I can’t win, then no one else can!” They will sabotage even themselves to prevent anyone getting more than them. This undermines anyone practising Win-Lose.

Win-Lose – The usual zero sum game, based on limited, non shareable resources. “I insist on winning and therefore you lose.” They will exploit anyone practising Win-Win.

Ordinary Win-Win – You want everyone to have the best outcome, but are vulnerable to anyone not playing by your rules. A Win-Lose person will exploit you and a Lose-Lose person will sabotage you. Both will present themselves to you as being Win-Win to take advantage of you.

Back to Second Position

You can do this with regard to a friend, family member or partner (in life or work) or especially to understand someone you are having difficulties with. You can also use it to study a character if you are an actor.

With some people, it can be uncomfortable taking on their persona and values. (See Logical Levels.) In this case, you might want to be very brief and concise... Get just the information you need and then step out cleanly. There is a theory that all so-called good and bad behaviours are latent within all of us. Therefore we can often feel that aspect of us who could be similar to that person! Second Position may help us use our judgement, yet avoid being judgemental. Or as the saying goes “There, but for the grace of God/fortune go I.”

There are people, who when you imagine yourself as them, you realise that their values are so far from yours, or their misunderstanding of you is so extreme, that you know that you need to distance yourself or protect yourself from them. I once put myself in the place of a business partner who was sabotaging whatever I did for the company. As him, I could not see beyond his own concept of me, and that however hard I worked, he reinterpreted it as me being “money grabbing and wanting to take over the company.” These were the words that came into my head as him. I knew I had to leave to prevent him doing further damage to the other partners. The ‘Win-Win or No Deal’ was that I knew that I would be fine on my own and that he along with the other two partners would be fine without me—the company would not be sabotaged because of me.

Sometimes you will get an understanding of someone you were at odds with and be able to relate much better with them. I surprised both my mother and myself, by being able to see how her point of view – the opposite of mine – was perfectly reasonable from having had her background. We found deep rapport and I then discovered that she understood my point of view perfectly, though she thought I needed to be less idealistic, more practical and toughen up a bit.

With practice, you will start to automatically put yourself more accurately in other people’s places and understand where they are coming from. You may even find that it is as if you are listening to yourself from their ears ahead of time, and feeling how well your meaning comes across and hearing yourself updating what you want to say until it comes across in the way that you want – and only then find yourself saying what you wanted, in the most appropriate way.

Logical Levels

One of the presuppositions of NLP, quoted earlier, is:

The positive worth of an individual is held constant; while the value and appropriateness of their internal and/or external behaviour is questioned.²

Robert Dilts, one of the early students and developers of NLP, came up with a way of differentiating aspects of a person based on a system proposed by Bertrand Russell.

We often judge a person by their behaviour or beliefs, not taking into account the many other aspects that make them who they are. There are different breakdowns of these ‘levels’ and my favourite version is the following, though rather than being a list, it is more like a stack or the floors of a building. Each is built on the one below, though none is more important than any other.

Connectedness

Identity

Values

Beliefs

Behaviour

Capability

Environment

I will describe them, as it were, from the ground up:

Environment

Starting at the base, someone's environment will strongly shape how they are. Deprivation will exclude many possibilities, though possibly encourage resourcefulness. Exceptions occur: Richard Bandler claims he learned keyboard by remembering the notes on the school piano and painting them on a piece of wood and practising on that. He became a band leader and session musician for Hendrix and the Moody Blues.

On the other hand from his parents' resource rich environment, Mozart played piano and violin and was composing by age five. A deprived environment may encourage crime or compassion. Or a very wealthy environment might encourage fear of loss and therefore selfishness, or gratitude and generosity.

Both past and present environments make a difference to a person. The saying goes, "If you want to fly with the eagles, stop swimming with the ducks." The company you keep is likely to determine what you are likely to do.



Capability

Often, though not always, capability can be shaped by environment, as seen in the examples above. We sometimes say, "If I were in their shoes, I would do so and so." Not realising that we have the ability to do this specific thing, and they do not.

Capability is a product of latent ability as well as learning and learned skills. One should not judge someone's value as a person for a lack of either, but one should use one's critical judgement if you consider relying on such a person for a particular result.

I know someone with neurological problems whose abilities are very limited, yet he is a very charming, inspiring young man.

Behaviour

Another person's behaviour is usually what impacts us most. Though we often judge a person by their behaviour, it will be shaped by their environment, capabilities, beliefs and values, and possibly more. In the film *I Swear*, about Tourette Syndrome sufferer John Davidson, despite his often objectionable behaviour, someone says of him "He wouldn't hurt a fly!" One could class Tourette's as being part of a person's inner environment.

We might take a person's behaviour towards us as a judgement by them on ourselves. However, when we consider all their other aspects, we often realise that it is more to do with themselves.

Beliefs

Beliefs and values used to be placed together. They influence each other, but are quite separate. Beliefs are about how one perceives the world. Consciously and unconsciously, they make up one's model of the world. They obviously influence behaviour, though behaviour can contradict someone's beliefs... A person may believe that exercise is good for them, and yet they do not exercise, perhaps because they value comfort above health.

Values

These are what truly drive us. Valuing comfort above health means the person does not exercise much. A person may believe in generosity, yet they unconsciously highly value wealth, and are not very generous.

These are our core principles. I used to have strong religious beliefs, though my values that many would ascribe to my former faith, both preceded it and persisted after. To me a value is beyond a belief.

Identity

This is perhaps the least tangible category. People have travelled the world trying to find out who they are, or have meditated, or sought teachers.

Some will claim paradoxically that they are their true self when they are in 'The Zone' or its equivalent. However, they will often say that they are no longer aware of themselves, but are part of what they are involved in at the time.

We often define ourselves by an occupation or an achievement, and I believe these are relevant. However, I sense that who we sense we are is made up from all the Logical Level aspects, just as each aspect is influenced by all the others. However, I also think our identity has a lot to do with our principles and values, whether or not we are growing as a person, and how we relate to our world and other people. This last aspect we could call 'Connectedness'. I believe that being associated

and present, as well as being connected with others and nature, and wanting justice and fairness for all, gives us the strongest sense of identity.

Connectedness

The concept of 'Spiritual' was added later by some, though others claimed there was no spiritual realm, but that we behaved spiritually by how we treated the world and others. The term 'Connectedness' embraces both concepts: One connects with Spirit by respecting others, or one respects others and is thus connected.

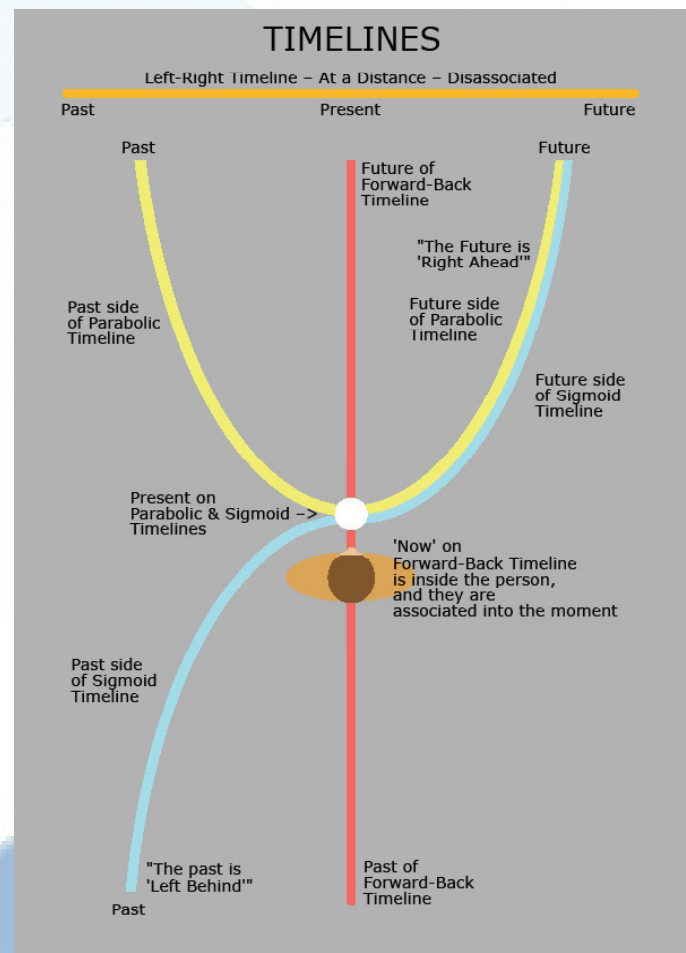
This is not *whether* we are connected, but how and to what extent, influenced by beliefs, values, environment etc. It is also how we connect back to our own and other people's environments, thereby metaphorically 'closing the loop'.

Timelines & Perspectives

Spatial Concepts of Time

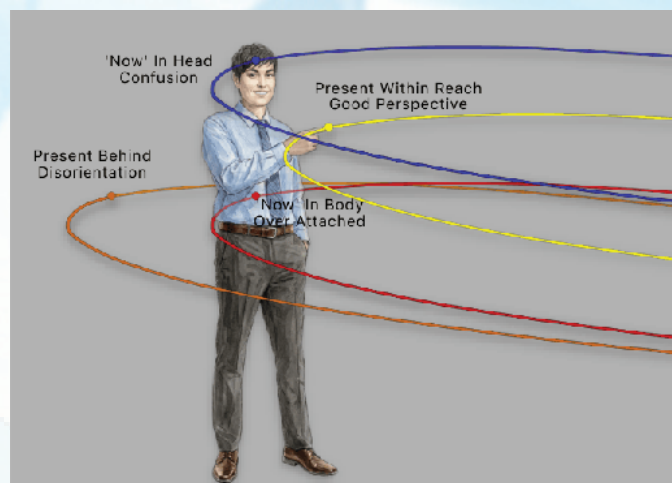
Most people seem to be aware of conceiving of time as being spatial. The most usual concept is that the past is behind us and the future is ahead, as if we are on a journey. In language we say "the far future", and "the distant past." We also say that "the future is *right* ahead" and "the past is *left* behind." This signifies a sigmoid timeline (see later) and as we saw with the eye access cues in the last article, this seems to linguistically acknowledge how we neurologically treat time spatially. Note that for many left handed people, the handedness is reversed.

The concept of the future being ahead of us is, however, not universal. In Eastern cultures, people often think of the past as being below them, and the future as being above, as if they are aspiring to greater heights. In either of these cases, we perceive time as being spread along a usually straight line.



Left-Right Linear Timeline

When it comes to thinking of time more consciously, many of us think of time as if it is on a straight line at some distance in front of us, going from left to right, past to future. This incorporates the advantage of disassociation so that we can look at the past, present, or future calmly and unemotionally, and it also gives us an easy perspective to differentiate between different times and events.



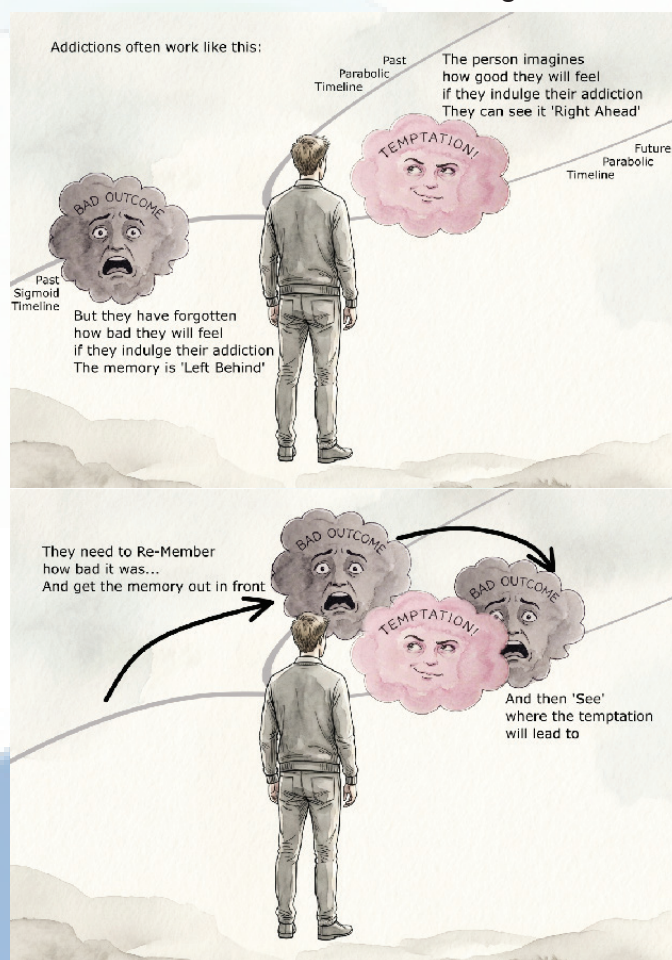
Therapeutic Use

For resolving traumas and unpleasant memories, a proficient therapist will often use a distant left-right timeline in order to disassociate their client from the issues, as if the client is looking at their life from the perspective of a guardian angel or a wise and beneficent friend. This way, it is easy to recognise and learn from one's mistakes, seeing how one might have handled a situation differently in the past. Thus often resolving fears and regrets. I recommend finding an NLP Master Practitioner if you want to engage as a client in this kind of work.

Parabolic Timelines

When we are less deliberate about reviewing the past and planning the future, many people unconsciously view time as being along a parabola, with the past away in front to the left. The present is in line with where they are, and the future is away in front to the right. In planning mode, this allows a person to pick what has worked in the past and sort of slide a copy of it into the future. You can also see what did not work in the past and modify that so that problems are avoided in the future.

The location of 'Now' on that parabola, makes a difference.

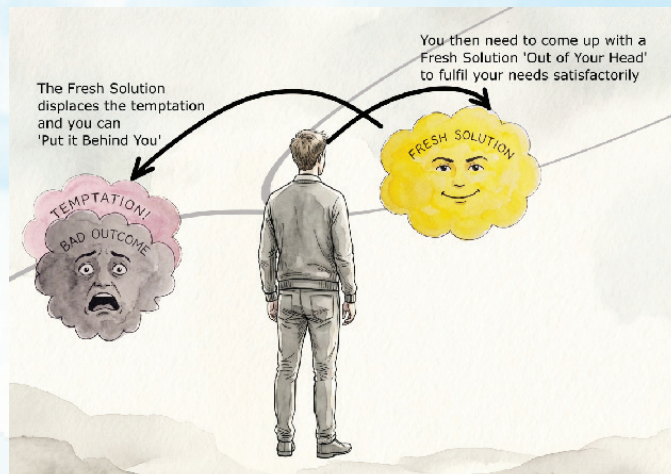


If 'Now' is in their head, it tends to cause confusion.

If 'Now' is in their chest, they tend to be too attached to both the past and the future and again are less able to plan clearly.

Rarely, if the present is behind them, they are disoriented and find it difficult to compare 'Now' with past or future.

The ideal is to have the present at upper chest level, a little under an arm's length away in front of you. This gives you sufficient disassociation, even from the moment of 'Now' as well as a good perspective of past, present and future.



Sigmoid Timeline

Often, when we think about things in the past, it is as if they are 'Left Behind.' For a right-handed person, the future would be the half parabola on their right, in front, whereas the past bit would be the reverse of the left of the parabola, so that it veers off to the left, but behind them. Combined, the future and past make a sigmoid line. For people who had a nominally Christian upbringing, when they think of having believed in Father Christmas, it is as if that idea is to the left, a long way behind them.

Addictions

Many people want to leave the past behind them, but there is a risk here. It means that they may not readily look at even the recent past, which makes them vulnerable to repeating their mistakes.

This is particularly the case with addictions, where the temptation, seen right ahead, bold and bright, and within arm's reach, is very compelling, but the memory of the negative results of the last time, is behind them, out of awareness. Therefore, they make the same mistakes over and over again. Better for them to have the vivid memory of the negative consequences clear in front of them to the left, so that they can now transfer that across to the right, bigger and bolder, and just beyond their temptation.

This will discourage them, though they still need a far better short and long term alternative to boldly displace the temptation and knock it over to the left



and then behind them. So that now the whole idea of the addiction has been 'left behind' and they can get on with improving their life.

Pseudo-Orientation in Time

Pseudo-Orientation in Time is a full association of yourself in the past or in the future, seeing what you saw or would see, hearing the sounds, and feeling the sensations, as if you are there right now.

Of course, we do this naturally. We can revel in the past, or be lost in a daydream in the future. This can be motivating. We can also get stuck worrying, revisiting something, or dwelling on or in something negative that may happen. This rarely helps to resolve the issue, so you need to disassociate and look at it from a safe distance so that your mind is more resourceful.

Applications

Having first seen from a disassociated point of view how we might have handled something in the past, we can then associate into that situation and live a false memory of how we would have resolved it, had we known then what we know now. This acts as a rehearsal, and cements a positive experience of handling the situation into your memory. This is then the first thing accessed by our minds if we encounter a similar situation again. We know it is a false memory, though we are not fooled by it. Our neurology simply treats it as more relevant than the original one so long as it produces a positive outcome.

Likewise, having seen how to resolve a future situation, you can associate into that and again live through dealing with it successfully. This programmes your mind to know what to do if it occurs.

Planning a Project

If you have an ambition, imagine floating high up above your life and floating out into the future above your timeline, and then land yourself vividly into where you have achieved it. Notice everything about your success first. Now look back towards the present to see what you had to do to get to where you are (in the future) now. Imagine each stage as vividly as possible. Work out timescales and then return to the present, knowing that the deeper part of your mind is now already programmed to take you through those stages towards your objective. This is far more powerful than ordinary positive thinking and is superbly described in Paul McKenna's book, [Power Manifesting - The New Science of Getting What You Want](#) (2025.⁵) Paul McKenna's hypnosis is based on Milton Erickson and NLP. He is an NLP Master Trainer and co-trained with Richard Bandler when I was learning NLP and assisting on their courses.

No Regrets Coyote

A very useful technique when encountering a new person or opportunity, is to imagine yourself in the future, maybe in a month or year or much longer, looking back on what may have transpired and noticing if you feel good about it. This is a way of accessing your unconscious perception and processing, which we do not have direct access to. You can also invite someone you are considering embarking on a project or relationship with, to do the same. Tell them

“OK, so I want you to imagine yourself in the future, maybe soon or maybe in a couple of years’ time, looking back on what we may have shared together, and let me know if you feel good about it now!”

If they are congruent that they feel good, it implies that they have immunised themselves against possible regrets and are willing to take responsibility for their own part in the project or relationship. If there is any indication of doubt in what they say, their tone, their body language, hesitancy or expression, it is probably best for you to avoid going ahead with them. It means they are not fully comfortable with the idea.

Temporal Predicates

Any words that indicate or represent time, the passing of time, the past, present, or future are called temporal predicates. The previous example shows how we naturally use these to get others to manipulate time.

“In the future”

“Soon”

“A couple of years’ time”

“Looking back” (Implied by context)

“May have shared”

“Feel good about it now!”

In this case ‘now’ gets the person associated into the future and the present at the same time, bringing the expected good feelings from the future directly into the present.

One of Richard Bandler’s classic opening therapeutic questions is:

So what seems to have been the problem, now?

This frames the problem as having been in the past, and casts doubt on whether it actually was a problem or just seemed to be. Without denying that it may still be a problem, it brings the person directly into the present, here and now, where the problem may not exist. This disassociates the client from the problem and allows a fresh perspective for them to start looking towards the future.

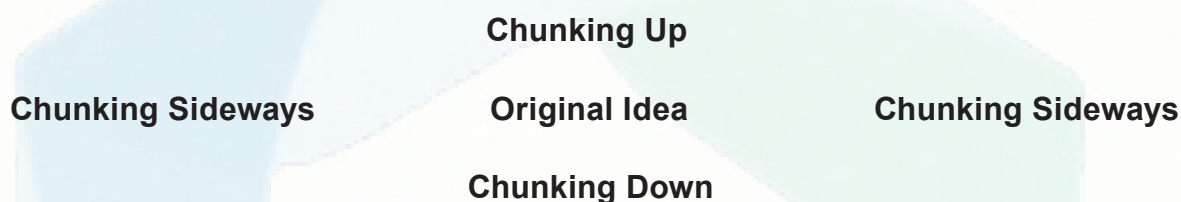
Chunking

Q: How do you eat an elephant?

A: One bite at a time!

In NLP, this concept of organising ideas and understanding their relationship is called 'chunking'.

There are three ways of chunking. Either differentiating ideas into smaller pieces, 'chunking down', organising into more generalised categories, 'chunking up', or 'chunking sideways' which is finding things in the same or similar category.



This can be used to resolve many organisational challenges. It can also be used to clarify our desired outcomes. We may have a specific desire; however, that desire is unconsciously intended to fulfill a more important need. An archetypal example might be:

A man is conflicted. He wants a sports car, but it is impractical for him and he cannot afford it.

One might ordinarily ask: "Why do you want a sports car?" though this is unlikely to be productive. Alternatively, you could engage him like this:

You: "So you want a sports car?"

"What specific car do you want?" – Chunking down. This gives no information about why he wants it, but helps to associate him with imagining having this specific one.

Now you can say:

"Imagine you have this sports car right now. You're in it, you're driving it.

You see what you see, hear the sounds, feel the sensations...

What does having this sports car achieve for you?"

Man: "I can drive fast, and that's exciting." – Higher chunk.

You: "What else does it achieve for you?" – Sideways chunk.

Man: "It makes me feel good. It makes me feel like I have arrived. It makes me feel that people will respect me." – He has chunked up higher than excitement.

You: "So here you are. You are standing outside your sports car, and people respect you. Notice how this makes you feel.

What does being respected like this achieve for you?" – You associated him with the higher chunk.

Man: "I feel confident. I feel that the kind of partner that I would like to be with would want to be with me." – The man has chunked up a level again.

You: "So here you are, you're confident. Your ideal partner is with you.

What does this achieve for you?" – You associated him into this.

Man: "I feel complete in myself." – Very high chunk.

You: "So here you are right now.

Feel what it feels like to be complete in yourself right now.

What does this achieve for you?" – You associated him in this.

Man: "I feel comfortable, at peace, complete."

At this stage, the man has chunked up to recognise his higher values of what he hoped to achieve from owning the car, or even thinking he needed a partner for.

Further questions will simply bring up the same or similar values and goals.

You could now say:

"So here you are...

You feel comfortable, at peace, and complete in yourself right now...

So, what else could have practically and reliably produced this sense of comfort, peace, and being complete in yourself right now?"

This invites the man to chunk sideways from having the sports car or partner, to however else he might more readily feel complete in himself. Examples might be:

Sorting his life out, getting a satisfying job, finding a hobby that satisfies him, learning to develop the confidence within himself to approach a potential partner.

Between you, you could chunk down into the details of each of these options, perhaps chunking sideways through various details. You could also chunk up to the more general examples of these aspects: the types of job or hobby, different types of personal development and confidence courses and disciplines (maybe try some Alexander lessons!)

The immediate need for the sports car or even a partner, is now averted, and the ultimate aim of feeling complete is already achieved from within himself. Though he may need to take action on his life, to make this feeling reliable.

NLP Language Patterns and Chunking

Meta Model

This usually chunks down from generalities to specifics. What specifically is being presumed in a presupposition, and how is that justified? How can we learn the original intent of a lost performative or modal operator of necessity? What or who is referred to by the particular noun or referential index specifically? What is the actual action of the unspecified verb? How is it done? What is the specific missing information?

Sometimes we need to chunk sideways. In modal operators, what would have to be true to go against a rule or social norm or to overcome a limitation? In cause-effect ill-formedness, what else could be the cause of the effect? In complex equivalence, what else could be meant instead of the assumed conclusion?

Milton Model

This chunks up from specifics to generalities, from concrete to theoretical. All the meta-model principles can be reversed. This then allows the listener to fill in their own details of what the generality means for them.

Instead of describing how to be confident, you invoke the concept of confidence for that person. As you do, they step into their own idea of what that feels like and therefore they create their own version of confidence.

Reframing

Richard Bandler once claimed that the book Reframing (1982)⁶ was cobbled together by the publishers in order to have something else to sell. However, you could say that any form of looking at the same thing from a different point of view, a different time frame, with different submodalities, or from a different chunk or logical level is a form of reframing.

There was once a television advert for a newspaper, showing a young man barging an older woman in a busy street. It then replayed the shot, but showing that there was something about to fall on the woman and that the man had saved her from it. The newspaper was, of course, demonstrating that you needed the wider frame or context to understand the actual story.

In 1946, talking about the risk of nuclear war, Albert Einstein said:⁷

“... a new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move to higher levels.”

This has been misquoted to say that a problem cannot be solved at the same level on which it was created or that it exists, which is probably true. One needs to be able to look at any problem or challenge within a much wider context in order to see where solutions and potentials are. The simple act of disassociating oneself from a problem or a challenge or even an opportunity allows you to let go of your emotional attachment and see things more clearly and objectively within a very much wider context.

Summary

In order to drive a car, you do not need to know how either the engine or the steering work. With practise, you get to drive it without even thinking about it consciously. As humans, we grow up completely unaware of how we ‘drive’ our own minds. We do not know the structure of our own thinking. We rarely know when we are talking to ourselves, and are unaware of the tones that we use. We are unaware of visualising or how we visualise, or how our structures affect us emotionally to demotivate or motivate us. Many of us are victims of reliving the mistakes of our past or of worrying about the future without knowing how to resolve either of these efficiently. We are stuck in our habitual thinking patterns. When you become aware of these patterns, you are able to interrupt them and choose different ones, which serve your purposes better.



I strongly recommend that people deliberately practise instantly disassociating from any situation that demands clearer thinking and more positive action. This is potentially easier for us as Alexander teachers and students, as we have learned to inhibit our immediate response to a stimulus, allowing that space for something different to occur to us, to either think or do.



Alexander's principles of inhibition and conscious choice match perfectly with knowing how our minds work. We are able to choose how we think, what choices and decisions to make, and what beliefs to form. Together the Alexander Technique and NLP make a mutually supportive structure which I believe the world so desperately needs to get beyond its current problems.

Notes

1. Lao Tsu. *Tao te Ching*. Translated © 1972 by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English. London, Wildwood House.

2. Presuppositions of NLP:

These presuppositions are mostly drawn from an interactive training resource I was helping to write, called PowerSense. It was never published. I have copyright over my writings for it. It in turn was drawn from various training manuals including: Bandler, Richard and La Valle, J. 1996. *NLP™ Master Practitioner Manual*. Newark, Nj: NLP Seminars Group International. (Private manual.)

3. Ashby's Law of Requisite variety:

Wikipedia has: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variety_\(cybernetics\)#Law_of_requisite_variety](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Variety_(cybernetics)#Law_of_requisite_variety)
Accessed May 2026.

In 1964, W. R. Ashby developed a law or principle based on information systems. These are subject to distortions and therefore need systems to detect and correct them. A glitch in a Youtube video is of little consequence, but one in your bank account could be disastrous. Ashby proposed it was like a game, where one player would produce distortions and the other had to have sufficient options to detect and correct them sufficiently. The requisite variety was the threshold number of options that the second player needed to achieve this. Ashby helped formalise the logic and mathematics for this.

He then proposed more generally that greater variety meant more control over a process. Bandler, as a mathematician and computer scientist in the late 60 and early 70s, would have been well aware of Ashby's Law and readily seen its human equivalent when modelling people and their interactions. Hence the presupposition:

The individual with the greatest flexibility of thought and behaviour will generally control the outcome of an interaction.

This has since been adopted widely as a principle in business organisation.

4. Joyce, James. *Dubliners*, 1917. pp. 133-4, New York, Ny. B. W. Huebsch.

From https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dubliners/A_Painful_Case Accessed May 2026
(1st edition 1914. London. Grant Richards.)

5. McKenna, Paul. *Power Manifesting: The New Science of Getting What You Want*, 2025. London, Headline Welbeck Non-Fiction (Hachette.)

6. Bandler, Richard and Grinder, J. *Reframing: Neurolinguistic Programming and the Transformation of Meaning*, 1982. Moab, Ut. Real People Press. Available at: <https://lifechangework.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/richard-bandler-john-grinder-reframing.pdf> Accessed May 2026.

7. The New York Times, 1946, reports Einstein's speech here: <https://www.nytimes.com/1946/06/23/archives/the-real-problem-is-in-the-hearts-of-men-professor-einstein-says-a.html> Accessed May 2026.

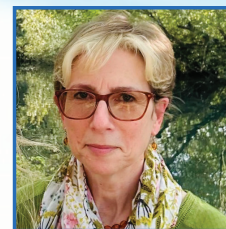
Having come across NLP during his last year of Alexander Technique teacher training in 1990, **David Owen** attended, assisted, and even ran many NLP courses. He qualified as an NLP Master Practitioner with Dr. Richard Bandler, its originator and Dr Paul McKenna in 1997 and as a trainer in 2001 and assisted them for some years. He applied the principles of NLP, as well as positive reinforcement, to teaching the Alexander Technique from early in his Alexander teaching career. He is now developing Loosen Up™ both to train teachers his teaching methods as well as to promote the Alexander Technique globally.

He can be emailed at loosenupp.org@gmail.com and his websites are <https://loosenupp.org/> and <https://alexandertechniqueplymouth.co.uk/>



Training with David Gorman – Reflections on my Time at CFT

BY CAROLYN SIMON



How I came to The Centre For Training

Having been inspired to train as an AT teacher, the question was: where? My first teacher, Richard Brennan, was clear that the place to go was David Gorman's school in Holloway, north London. My aunt, who had studied Cranial Sacral Therapy alongside Margaret Edis, recommended that I should seek out Margaret. Luckily for me, it transpired that all roads led to the Centre For Training (CFT), where Margaret was at that time David's Assistant Head of Training.

I phoned David to arrange to visit his school. Our conversation reminded me of the joke about how a dog hears human language, recognising only its own name: "*Bla bla bla bla Rover bla bla Rover.*" Except that what I heard, as a Canadian accent summarised what the Technique was about, was: "*Bla bla bla Change bla bla Change.*" The Technique, I understood from this, was not about Posture. It was about Change.

The following week, I spent a day at CFT. It was a great space, on the second floor above Marks & Spencer on the Holloway Road. A pillar that supported the ceiling had been transformed, using tissue paper, into a colourful palm tree from which paper bananas and a toy monkey hung. In the kitchen area was a poster of an egg balancing on the palm of a hand, captioned with the single word: POISE.

The trainees seemed very bright. Once they had left for the day, David gave me a 1:1 lesson. This mostly involved my walking round the room, with David's hands and his words inviting my attention "up and out, up and out." The experience was transforming, and I remember saying to David, "I don't understand why EVERYONE doesn't want to do this."



David at CFT, taken in November 1993

CFT 1993-1995

I started training in January 1993. During my first year, Margaret left. She explained that the gap

between her and David's takes on the AT had become too wide. I began to understand that David was experimenting with a more stripped-back approach to teaching the Technique, which Margaret feared might lead to 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater.'

Ann Penistan took over as Assistant Director. Ann came from a theatre background and had worked extensively as an AT coach at the Shaw Festival and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival in Canada. As with Margaret (although minus the 'Walter' anecdotes), I liked her and her teaching a lot.

I was told that in my first year, the main work was simply to become more AWARE. The pitfall here was that, at first, checking in to notice what I was doing/feeling led my attention inwards - disconnecting from the world around; focussing on a part rather than the whole - i.e. exactly the opposite of the 'unified field of attention' that was the goal. Gradually, this paradox resolved itself, helped by plenty of work on recognising when one was narrowing in, and NOT doing it.

Structure and Function

The school ran from 10.00 a.m. until 3.00 p.m., Monday to Friday, with a week's break every fourth week. Two mornings a week David lectured on 'Structure and Function', using coloured marker pens to draw on the whiteboard. His graph plotting resistance vs length in relation to muscle and connective tissue was a particular favourite, as were his illustrations of muscle structure. The key learning point: 'Use affects structure affects function.' Sometimes David would get out his suitcase containing a disarticulated skeleton. Whichever part of the anatomy we were studying, e.g. the foot, would be passed round the semi-circle of trainees for us to handle and examine. 'S&F' was considered David's strong suit; he ran weekend workshops on the topic for teachers from other trainings. David had after all, hand-written and illustrated 'The Body Moveable: Blueprints of the Human Musculoskeletal System' - a deeply impressive achievement. The legend was that, as an art student in Canada, he had sneaked into the medical school at night to study and draw the dissected cadavers.

Books

One morning a week we would study 'The Books'. Primarily this meant working our way through Alexander's writings (no, I don't remember 'Man's Supreme Inheritance' getting much of a look-in). However - and for this I am eternally grateful - Frank Pierce Jones also received a lot of attention. At the time, FPJ's book - which was then titled 'Body Awareness in Action' - was out of print. Undeterred, David photocopied and spiral-bound a copy for each of us. It was subsequently



Me with CFT teachers at my graduation, December 1995.
L to R: Penny O'Connor, Carolyn Simon, Ann Penistan, David Gorman

republished by Mouritz as 'Freedom to Change'.

We also studied 'Reforming Education' by the American philosopher Mortimer Adler. David wanted us to appreciate that the best attitude for learning was 'docility.' This was a state of open-mindedness, being receptive to new information, rather than the closed-mindedness of thinking you know already. For me, the ability to stay open in the face of a strong stimulus - rather than reacting to it – has been another great gift from my time at CFT.

Teaching Aids and Equipment

For those interested in the physical paraphernalia, I can recall the following: an abundance of wooden stools from Habitat; two or three teaching tables; a large Calor gas cylinder (for practising lifting a heavy object without undue effort); a balance board; a couple of physio balls; a tensegrity model; a filing cabinet containing dissertations written by students past and present; a tape deck (also used for recording David's lectures) and a collection of cassettes; a piano.

Visiting Teachers

I lucked out here. One of the attractions of training at CFT was the programme of guest teachers. David's great friend Tommy Thompson – with whom he and a small group of others had set up ATI in 1993 – joined us for a week each year, as did the remarkable Juilliard Professor and teacher of Dalcroze Eurythmics, Bob Abramson. Barbara Conable and Bruce Fertman also came for a week each. Barbara shared her body-mapping wisdom. She was touched by our appreciation of her poetry but was dismayed to find us so pulled down and less focussed than she was on freeing our necks. Whereas David avoided endgaining at all costs, Barbara made it clear that if she was working with a musician, she was happy to prioritise giving them the information that would most quickly help them. Why wouldn't you?



(Front Row, L to R) CFT teachers Penny O'Connor, Jane Saunderson, David Gorman and Ann Penistan with (Back Row) CFT's "class of 1994" at their graduation picnic in July 1995.

I have never been able to emulate the magic of Bruce Fertman's hands (I remember watching a shoulder widen before my eyes) but I was moved by the spiritual dimension to his teaching and (from the sublime to the mundane!) have adopted his interest in exploring our use in everyday applications such as doing the washing up.

Other overseas visitors to the school while I was there included Mio Morales, David Mills, and Malcolm Balk. Home-grown but just as much of a treat: Lucia Walker joined us once a week for a whole term.

Regular Teachers

Most of the regular teachers were themselves alumni/alumnae of CFT, including the recently graduated Penny O'Connor. Invaluably, we also benefitted from the presence of Jane Saunderson who, like David himself, had trained with Walter and Dilys Carrington at CTC in Lansdowne Road. I say 'invaluably' not only because I loved her calm clarity and her method of framing our explorations as an experiment, but also because – when I needed to prepare for an external STAT assessment – Jane was the person who could teach me 'hands on the back of the chair.' David was not into games or procedures. I never saw him teach HOBC or Whispered Ah. Ann Penistan prepped me on the latter, presenting it as a 'Communication Exercise.'

Turns

We trainees worked informally with each other and with whichever teacher might be available. There was a chart on a side table, along with a couple of highlighter pens, which David and Ann used to (in theory) ensure an even distribution of turns with them.

Space

On day one, David gave each new trainee an A5 spiral notebook for recording our insights and experiences. On the back cover of mine I stuck a card by Charles Schultz. It depicts Snoopy lying on his back (fully rather than semi- supine!) on the roof of his kennel, looking upwards at a starry sky. The caption reads: *Lately, I've been thinking about space.* We did a lot of that with David – including the space above and the space behind. During a turn he would stand with me at the window, looking out at the panoramic view of London's rooftops and spires. and invite me to expand my visual awareness "not inches but miles." I learned that this widening one's field of attention was a powerful way in to becoming more present and connected, more "whole, free and choosing."

Groups

Once a week, in a trio with other trainees at a similar level, we would have a group with David. This took place in the kitchen area and involved a single chair. One of us would be *the student*, sitting in the chair or standing in front of it; one would be *the teacher*; the third would be *the observer*. This was all quite serious and a little intimidating. *The teacher's* default contact (after a moment of stopping, of course) was with their hands on *the student's* upper chest and upper back. How to get *the student* to come to sitting/standing without doing too much? From time-to-time David would ask us to casually plonk a hand on the wall, the point being that *this* was how little effort was required.

Downstairs

David's lease included the use of a vast space on the first floor of the building, immediately below our school. Once a week, the third-year students would use this room to give (free) lessons to members of the public. This was also where the STAT external assessments took place. I remember

discreetly going into reaction when Karen Wentworth, without so much as a by-your-leave, undid a fellow student's belt because his trousers were too tight. Fortunately, the fellow student was used to this and was unfazed.

Master Classes

By the end of my time there, the school was winding down. David had been stung by a STAT investigation and stopped taking on new students in order – once the trainees below me had graduated – to close the school and move abroad. There was no longer a budget for visiting teachers. One thing David did more of, though, was Master Classes for musicians. We would sit in our semi-circle and watch as he worked with an individual musician – perhaps an oboist, pianist or viola player. Through a mixture of observation and questioning, David would help the performer notice ways in which they were using themselves unconstructively – be it by disconnecting from the audience, tensing during a difficult passage or some other pattern of misuse. As ever, *Awareness* became the forerunner of *Change* – of consciously *not* doing the habitual thing, to let the right thing do itself. Thrillingly, even I, a non-musician, could hear a profound improvement in the performance, particularly in its emotional power.

After CFT closed in 1997, David focussed on this hands-off style of work, which he called Learning Methods: <https://learningmethods.com>. Personally, I was saddened that he was no longer using his hands in his teaching, as he was so good with them. Many times he had put soft knuckles against my ribs and seemed to psychically know what I was thinking.

The Gorman Way

Many years ago, Peter Nobes (who was 'head boy' - i.e. the most senior male trainee - when I arrived at CFT) suggested that he and I should create a CPD session on David Gorman's approach to the AT. I declined, not least because at that time I did not feel confident that I understood the difference between David's approach and any other approach. In the intervening years, I have worked with many other teachers. I am now clearer about what is quintessential about David's take on the AT. I would describe it as 'broad brush' – focussing on holistic principles, rather than directing specific parts; identifying endgaining and then not doing it; having faith in the primary control to organise you if you just let it, by removing the interferences. Two of his sayings I haven't yet quoted were:

Know where you want to go and just go there.

Get out of your own way.

I also want to mention an image he frequently used to convey the relationship between intention and free, co-ordinated movement: as if we were wearing a perfectly fitting rubber wetsuit, with hundreds of little tailors who, in every moment, let the muscular suit in or out by the perfect amount in order to effortlessly 'being' us to where we want to go.

Parting Thoughts

Even though our paths have not crossed for many years, David remains my teacher. I have turned out to be a true disciple! I am still teaching the Technique as it was taught to me by him, albeit filtered through my own personality, values and experience. Even though I am aware that his/my/our way is not a perfect match with other UK teachers, and being different is not always delightful, I have never felt inclined to jump ship.

I do confess to one significant difference. David disapproved of giving the student praise or encouragement. I think he believed that would corrupt their experience in some way, as they would be on the lookout for the teacher's approval. That goes against the grain for me. Rightly or wrongly, I am an encourager. If I feel joy at someone moving well, or successfully inhibiting, I will express that. Words like "excellent!" and "super!" do cross my lips. I have on more than one occasion been so moved by a change that has taken place that I have needed to 'take a moment.'

At the Dublin World Congress in August 2026, I was shocked and saddened to learn from Tommy Thompson that David was in the advanced stages of a neurological illness akin to Parkinson's. It seemed the cruellest irony that a man who understood so much more than most about the body moveable should now be at the mercy of a neurodegenerative movement disorder.

David's dedication at the front of *The Body Moveable* (1981) has stayed with me as an apt metaphor for AT lessons:

...to whoever invented the screw, which is a very good way of going around in circles but still getting somewhere.

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Carolyn Simon is a Member of the Society of Alexander Technique. Carolyn's first career was in Publishing and her second was in Training Consultancy. Since graduating from the Centre for Training in 1995 she has taught the Alexander Technique in North West London. Carolyn was a member of ATI until c.2008, attending conferences in Budapest, Arizona and Ireland. Carolyn has a degree in English Literature from Cambridge University and is qualified as an NLP Master Practitioner. She is an aficionado of the Feldenkrais Method. Her loves include her husband, son, Shakespeare, Early Music and birds.

Judit Pasztor Interview with Delia Rosenboom

BY JUDIT PASZTOR



In this in-depth conversation, Delia speaks about trauma, shock, embodiment, presence, prolonged inhibition, and how her own experiences transformed the way she teaches the Alexander Technique.

I chose to interview Delia because her teaching is a profound blend of insight and inspiration. In particular, her work with trauma and the nervous system helped me learn an enormous amount about myself during the training. Her open-hearted, gentle approach gave me permission to trust the process, and I wanted to share that with others so they, too, could experience the relief, peace, and freedom this work can bring to our lives.

What first drew you to explore trauma in your Alexander Technique work?

My work with trauma quite naturally came out of my own experiences with trauma. As simple as that. I'm not sure if I would have started exploring it without the big trauma I experienced myself.

Very early on in my teaching days I was thrown into a first-hand experience of trauma, because Don Burton, who was my partner, suddenly died unexpectedly from a heart attack. At that time, I was about twenty-seven. Don owned an Alexander Technique training school, (Fellside Alexander School) where we both lived.

I lived there, I worked there — Alexander Technique was my whole life. Everything I did revolved around Alexander Teaching. Then overnight everything was turned upside down. He died, and my entire life as I knew it disappeared. I lost my partner, my home, my work, my whole structure of living.

At that time my body became what I can only describe as a knot of tension. Everything tightened to hold me together. Everything hurt. I felt a complete mess. And strangely, one of my main thoughts was:

“I'm not being a good example of the Alexander Technique.”

My neck wasn't free! I couldn't release and lengthen! Meanwhile my body was screaming out a completely different story. I didn't understand trauma at that point, so I thought:

“I need Alexander lessons to sort me out.”

So I went for lessons, and the teacher put me on the table and did a lot of directing and lengthening

and widening. And afterwards I felt awful – worse than before! I realised I simply couldn't handle having lessons.

And that became the beginning of a huge exploration:

What are the body's natural reactions to shock and trauma?

And how can we support somebody through that process without overriding what the body instinctively needs to do?

How did this experience change your understanding of “good use”?

One of the first things I had to let go of was the idea of “good use.”

I had been desperately trying to get back to what I thought good use should look like — open, free, lengthened, balanced. But gradually I realised that after a life-changing shock, it is not actually appropriate to be completely open and delicately balanced.

What is appropriate is that the body holds itself together – in other words, it contracts. So, I began replacing the idea of “good use” with “appropriate use.”

If somebody is in shock, tightening is not necessarily wrong. It may be the intelligent and appropriate response of an organism trying to survive. Obviously, we do not want somebody to stay in that state forever, but during acute trauma the body is doing the only thing it knows how to do.

This changed everything for me.

You often describe trauma as a kind of dissociation from the body. Could you say more about that?

When there is a major shock, I feel that the essence of oneself — the life force, soul, awareness, energy-body (use whatever language you want to use to think of this part) partially ‘exits’ the body to survive....as the experience is simply too much to process all at once.

For me personally, it genuinely felt as though part of me was hanging out somewhere above my head and to the right side. So, what gets left behind is a kind of ‘physical shell’ trying to function without being fully inhabited.

The body has no choice then but to contract to hold itself together. That contraction shows up as pain, narrowing, twisting, shallow breathing, tension around the shoulders and chest — all the physiological reactions we associate with trauma. But underneath that contraction there is also a feeling of absence.

When I put my hands on somebody in shock, inwardly I often find myself thinking:

“Where are you?”

There is a quality of ‘nobody being home’.

That is very different from ordinary muscular tension.

How do trauma patterns differ from ordinary tension patterns?

Everybody has patterns related to how they use themselves. Someone working at a desk for years develops one kind of pattern. A bricklayer develops another. A musician develops another. Those patterns have a certain muscular quality that we recognise as habitual tension, holding or stuckness.

But trauma has an entirely different energetic quality. Yes, the muscles contract, but there is also dissociation, coldness, emptiness, disorientation and numbness or a sense of fear.

Breathing often becomes shallow.

The nervous system becomes ungrounded.

People can feel foggy or numb.

And importantly, in acute shock the body actually needs contraction to help keep itself together within all this ‘absence and foginess’...

That was one of the great revelations for me.

If we immediately try to make somebody release and lengthen when their whole organism is trying to hold itself together, the body often experiences this as threatening – or even life-threatening.

Sometimes the muscles release temporarily and then tighten back up even more strongly afterwards — what I call the “rubber-band effect.” As mentioned, I experienced this myself when I had some AT sessions after the shock of Don passing, and I have also seen this repeatedly in others.

Can trauma remain hidden underneath long-standing tension?

Absolutely.

Quite often somebody comes for a lesson because of a bad back or shoulder pain etc, and only later does it emerge that ten years ago they experienced a car accident, bereavement, surgery, or some other major shock.

Sometimes as surface tension begins releasing, the deeper shock pattern underneath starts emerging. Suddenly the breathing changes. There may be jitteriness or emotional overwhelm. The

person may begin dissociating. At that point the whole approach must change.

What may have started as a simple piece of work suddenly becomes work around unresolved trauma.

That is why I feel it is so important for teachers to understand these patterns.

Could you describe the approach you developed through this work?

Let me give you an image first, because I think it explains the whole process beautifully.

Imagine a human being as a physical body fully inhabited by their energetic self — their essence, awareness, life force. Everything is filled up and embodied, like a bucket completely full of water.

Then imagine a major trauma occurs.

The energetic part of the person partially exits to survive.

Now the physical body is left trying to function like an empty shell. Because the shell is no longer fully inhabited, it contracts to hold itself together.

Now imagine that person goes for a 'traditional' Alexander lesson and the teacher starts encouraging them to release, open, expand, lengthen and widen. Effectively we are trying to pull apart the edges of a shell that is desperately trying to hold itself together.

For someone slumping at a desk from habit, direction may be very useful. But for someone in acute trauma, contraction is not simply a bad habit. It is survival.

And if we oppose that survival response too early, the body often tightens further.

So, I had to ask:

“If direction is not the answer here, then what is?”

What I gradually discovered was that the key was not imposing organisation onto the person but creating the conditions in which the person could safely begin inhabiting themselves again.

And that completely transformed my teaching.

What became central in this new approach?

Presence.

Listening.

Compassion.

Pacing.

And what I would call ‘prolonged inhibition.’ Not inhibition as a quick mental “stopping,” but as an ongoing state of receptivity, non-doing, patience, and deep listening.

I realised that one of the greatest tools we have as Alexander teachers is our hands. Traditionally we use our hands to encourage organisation and direction. But our hands can also communicate safety. They can communicate:

“I am here.”

“You are welcome exactly as you are.”

“You do not need to do anything or be anything.”

“You are OK exactly as you are right now”

“You do not need to release before you are ready.”

That became the foundation of my work.

I discovered that if I simply placed my hands on somebody quietly and compassionately and remained deeply present — without trying to fix them — something remarkable began happening. The person gradually began feeling safe enough to come back into themselves.

Not all at once. Only as much as they were ready, willing, and able to at that point in time. That pacing became fundamental.

I learned not to rush the nervous system.

Not to force release.

Not to assume I knew better than the body.

Instead, the work became about listening.

Listening with my hands.

Listening with presence.

Listening with my whole nervous system.

How do you help somebody begin reconnecting with themselves?

Often people in shock cannot even properly feel their own bodies. So, I begin very simply.

I might ask:

“Can you notice my hand?”

“Can you feel the warmth?”

“Can you notice / feel the contact of the table beneath you?”

These are very small invitations into embodiment. Gradually we move deeper:

“Can you feel your shoulder?”

“Can you feel the movement of your breath underneath?”

“Can you notice warmth, movement, emotion?”

There is a progression from outside awareness toward inner awareness, and in doing so, toward ‘inhabitation.’

And all the time I am listening with my hands.

There comes a moment — and it is very beautiful — when you feel the person beginning to come back into themselves. It feels like something waking up. Like spring flowers emerging after winter. Suddenly there is more warmth.

More breath.

More colour in the tissues.

More softness.

More movement.

More presence.

And when that happens, it is very important to acknowledge it. Because many people who have lived in shock for years are so accustomed to dissociation that they do not even realise they are beginning to inhabit themselves again. So, part of my role is helping them build a new sensory awareness:

“Yes, I can feel you more here.”

“Yes, something is changing.”

“Yes, you are coming back.”

“That’s wonderful..”

What creates safety in a lesson for somebody with trauma patterns?

The first thing is that the person must feel genuinely welcomed exactly as they are. Whatever happens in the lesson is welcome. People may cry.

Shake.

Laugh.

Become emotional.

The teacher’s nervous system and presence matter enormously. If somebody is traumatised, they are highly sensitive to everything: our voice, our pacing, our physicality, our emotional state, our energy....

So, I become calmer...

More spacious...

More grounded....

I slow my voice down....

And I continually check in:

“Are you OK with this?”

“Would it feel comfortable if I put my hands here?”

“How are you doing with this?”

The person needs to know they are in the driving seat. I don’t come in with a plan.

I throw everything I think I know out of the window and simply listen.

Can teachers unintentionally push too quickly?

Absolutely.

And usually with good intentions!

But if we push too quickly, we risk the person feeling unsafe and tightening back up afterwards. Tiny changes may appear insignificant externally, but for the person they can feel life changing. We must honour the timing of the nervous system.

When I went through my own grieving process, it took years. So, this work requires patience and surrendering our own agendas as teachers. It is not about us being clever or successful.

The person's body will show us what it is ready for and how quickly it can unfold. We must trust that.

How do you work when strong emotional reactions arise?

A lot of teachers become frightened when people cry or shake because they think:

“Oh no, now I have to become a psychotherapist.”

But what is happening is that energy which has been frozen in the body is beginning to move again. So, if somebody cries, shakes, trembles, laughs — I simply stay present. I might say:

“You are safe.”

“Whatever you are feeling is welcome.”

“Feel my hands.”

“Feel the table beneath you.”

“Let it move through.”

We do not want people to go deeply into the story and re-traumatise themselves. We want to help the body safely process and ‘move through’ the energy that has been stuck. And over thirty years of working this way, I have found again and again that if the teacher stays grounded and present, the waves of emotions or physical reactions move through naturally and settle without the need for any special interventions.

What qualities are needed in teachers who want to work this way?

I personally believe that if we have experienced shock and trauma ourselves, we may understand much more deeply how to work with people in this way, with compassion.

To do this work we need patience, acceptance, presence, love, compassion, and the willingness to surrender our own ego. We need to let go of needing to “fix” people. We need to let go of believing we know better than the body. We need to trust the process. And then afterwards we also need to take care of ourselves: After working with people in deep trauma, the room can sometimes feel ‘heavy,’ and any energies that the pupil may have brought or released, may have settled within my energetic field, affecting how I feel.....and so I may open the windows, clear the room with sound

or incense, wash my hands under cold water, or do whatever helps me to clear the pupils energy, ground and return to myself.

Ultimately, what do you feel truly heals?

I think presence itself heals. Not forcing. Not fixing. Not imposing.

Pure Presence.

Because when somebody finally feels safe enough to come back into themselves, the organism already knows how to heal. And through this process, people also gain tools for life. Later, when emotion or panic or grief arises in everyday life, they may remember:

“I can stay with this.”

“I can breathe.”

“I can feel my feet.”

“I can allow this to move through.”

For me, becoming present in the moment (which is perhaps a lifetime’s work in itself!) is the deepest part of this work.

Judit Pasztor trained with Delia Rosenboom at the South East Alexander School in Sussex, UK, from 2017 to 2021. Delia’s open-hearted, open-handed approach continues to deeply inform her teaching. Judit holds a BSc (Hons) in Geography and a BA in English. She teaches both in person and online, with a growing focus on ease in screen use and digital routines. Alongside her Alexander work, she also practises Reflexology separately. She has a particular interest in working with students of *A Course in Miracles*, exploring how the Alexander Technique can support a lived understanding of what the Course teaches about relationship, communication, choice, and peace.

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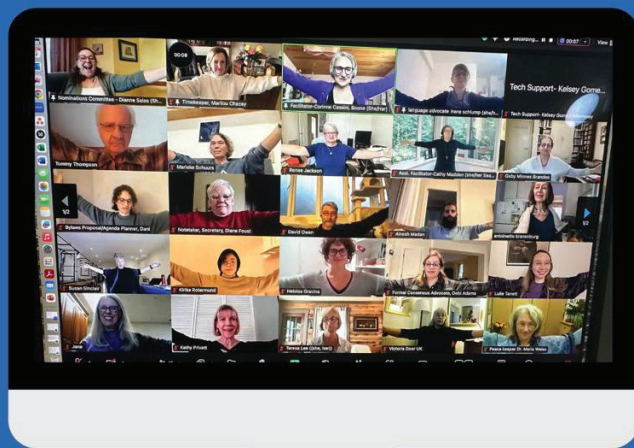
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