



Alexander
Technique

INTERNATIONAL

— *ExChange* —

SUMMER 2022



Table of Contents

Letter from the Editor - What are you here for? <i>By Julie Mulvihill</i>	Page 3
The World-Encompassing Alexander Technique <i>By Rosa Luisa Rossi and Dr. Maria Weiss</i>	Page 5
Kinetic Thinking: A New Look at Orders and Direction in the Alexander Technique <i>By William Conable</i>	Pages 10
Book In Review: The ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE: Twelve fundamentals of integrated movement Author Penelope Easten <i>By Robin Gilmore</i>	Pages 13
WPC at Work - 30 Years of ATI in 2022 <i>By Sara Goldstein</i>	Page 19
ExChange: Call for Submissions	Page 21



Letter from the Editor - What are you here for?

Dear ATI Membership,

I am so excited and honored to take the helm as the editor of the ATI ExChange! I am enthusiastic about ATI and the role of the ExChange but moreso, I am elated for the opportunity to work with and for YOU—the global community of Alexander Technique teachers. The ExChange is more than a benefit or product of ATI; it is a connection among us. It is a forum for sharing our research and creative ideas. It is an opportunity for us to engage together and deepen the work we all care about. I am here for that!

This May 2022 issue includes research about ATI and the connections and disparate needs of our global community. Rosa Louisa Rossi and Maria Weiss offer a very interesting and thought-provoking perspective of the differing regions of our membership and the corresponding issues for ATI teachers associated with these regions. It is a hopeful examination of the breadth of ATI and the importance of cross-pollinating regions as well as deepening in-region connections. For me, this article also inspires an opening for the ExChange to be useful in promoting the research and creative contributions of our membership globally, in multiple languages. I invite our global membership to test and utilize the tools described in the article and share the ways in which they are useful. I also invite the contributions of our non-English membership to the ExChange! I recognize the irony as an English-only speaker myself, but I cannot wait to share an editing process for the ExChange with a non-English speaker. The ExChange is here for that!

Also included in this issue is an article from Bill Conable about the way we conceive of Alexander's concept of orders, or direction, and what Bill calls *kinetic thinking*. It is a fascinating piece of research that Bill has discovered and is playing with in his teaching, moving, and writing, and it draws on perception and interpretation of Alexander's concepts in a contemporary and active way. Further, Robin Gilmore has reviewed Penelope Easten's new book, *The Alexander Technique: Twelve Fundamentals of Integrated Movement* (2021). Robin shares an honest and thorough account of this work including both the written aspects of the book as well as the experiential activities it offers. Robin delightfully moves us through the highlights of the book as she perceives them including an appearance of a snowy egret that visits Robin as she engages in thoughts about the book. The ExChange is here for big ideas, little ideas, snowy egrets, and the dailyness of practice!

Lastly, Sara Goldstein wrote an enthusiastic pitch, including voices from across ATI, for the ACGM that was to take place this August in Berlin. Unfortunately, the event has been cancelled and will be scheduled virtually for October. Details for the event are forthcoming, as will be opportunities to participate and present. In place of Sara's thoughts about the Berlin event is an encouragement to participate in the virtual conference. The ExChange is here for your reflections, impressions, and reverberations about the International Alexander Technique Conference in Berlin as well as your research and preparations for the ATI ACGM in October!

I hope that you and I can engage together in the ways available when the virtual conference takes clear shape. Look for an ExChange focused workshop or forum where we can ask questions, get to know the process, and talk ideas. The editing process, as it emerges under my leadership, is intentionally pedagogical and as collaborative as you might need or desire—you do not have to be a seasoned scholar to endeavor publication. I am interested in assisting and supporting you as your ideas unfold and am excited to work with you through drafts and conversations about your work.

I come to the ExChange having spent two years on the editorial team for the Journal of Emerging Dance Scholarship as well as freelance editing in the dance field. I am also a university dance professor occasionally, and a frequent community dance artist. I earned my PhD in Dance Theory and Practice from Texas Woman's University in 2017, writing about collaboration and dance making processes with a heavy emphasis on Cognitive Science, Contact Improvisation, and the Alexander Technique. I am an Alexander Technique teacher, certified in 2010 through Chesapeake Bay Alexander Studies.

I have recently been engaging in continuing education for myself that included the separate but overlapping ideas of boundary making and the creation of consent-forward spaces. I am learning to recognize two things in my AT practice that I want to share with you that are current practical research ideas and are transformative for me. While these research ideas remain practical for me at the moment, I would love to hear from you the ways in which you find these and other relative ideas in your practices, as well as what you may be writing about to share through the ExChange. I am here for discourse!

The first idea I am learning about is that saying “No, thank you” does not have to be the rejection of a person. My “No” is about me and what I need or can manage and is a measure of myself internally, not anyone else. I can even say “No” to myself and feel empowered in the assertion of my sensitivity and commitment to myself. This works reciprocally as well: If someone tells me “No, thank you,” I recognize that the “No” is about them and their needs, not a rejection of me—how wonderful that a person feels confident and vulnerable to say “No” to me! This concept may be easy for many of you, but for me as an eager people-pleaser it is game changing and really tough. For many students, the idea of “No” is prevalent as an inner dialogue that is critical and potentially self-annihilating. Shifting thinking to practice “No” as positive and empowering is an ongoing process and aligns spectacularly with AT skills. As a mother, I often hear “No” from my child as disrespectful and contrary. Indeed, sometimes this “No” seems to be said in order to very intentionally reject me! Shifting thinking around “No” as an act of love and boundary making can not only be preservative and protective as boundaries can be, but also can be releasing and activating for a host of positive possibilities, which perhaps I have never imagined.

The second idea I am learning about is the creation of consent-forward spaces, which I feel compelled to cultivate and contribute to for my students. Particularly in hands-on practice, setting up a space where students—whether in groups or privately—are invited to participate or experience work in contact with me or one another can be worrisome in this age of cultural trauma due to long-term isolation, the effects of previous experiences (conscious or otherwise), and simple discomfort with touch. A consent-forward environment is one in which the community agreements are verbalized repeatedly, and they are enacted with a sense of accountability. These spaces also require a reflective or evaluative system in place where participants can debrief publicly and/or privately. Offering ways in which participants can relate discomfort, as well as delight, about me and each other, but not necessarily to me or each other, gives the environment a method to shift and change. Perhaps this means setting up an anonymous share-box, creating a closure practice of spoken reflection together, or employing a colleague, assistant, or third party to be available for participants to voice concerns...and then encouraging the use of these methods as part of the AT experience and skills being taught. An intentional and concerted effort towards consent-forward spaces may invite diversity and inclusion in new ways for us as a global community.

The ExChange is a consent-forward space! We are committed to being safe and kind, honest and clear in process and in product. My hope is that the ExChange becomes a breathing organism through dialogue and development. Please utilize ATIExChangeEditor@gmail.com as a method for voicing your concerns (and delights)! You can also communicate with Rileigh at the ATI office, if you prefer. I encourage you to participate with the ExChange as it grows and shifts in the coming months and years. You, the ATI Membership, are the ExChange—what do you want to talk, write, draw, learn, think, move, exchange about together? What are you here for?

Onward,



~ Julie, ATI ExChange Editor



The World-Encompassing Alexander Technique

By Rosa Luisa Rossi and Dr. Maria Weiss

Special editing contributions by Catherine Kettrick



Introduction: The beginning of ATI

Prior to the founding of ATI, the only professional Alexander Technique organization in the world was STAT—the Society for Teachers of the Alexander Technique, and its affiliate societies.¹ This organization and the affiliate societies approve Alexander Technique training programs and share identical requirements for training: 1600 hours over three years; a five to one student/teacher ratio; 80% of the time devoted to “hands on” work; and learning “procedures,” e.g. lunge, hands on the back of the chair, etc. From the point of view of the affiliated societies, if one did not train in a STAT approved program, one did not teach the Alexander Technique.

ATI was founded in 1992, by teachers who did not train in STAT approved training programs. Instead, many of them had trained in apprentice-style programs with Marj Barstow or Frank Pierce Jones. From the beginning, these teachers wanted an organization that was open, inclusive and welcoming of all teachers, students and trainees of the technique, regardless of where and how they trained. Because they made the decision to not approve training curricula, they had to find a qualitative way to “evaluate the competencies of teachers.”² Since 1992, ATI has been working on this task: The Professional Development Committee has developed content for the means of “evaluating the competencies of teachers,” and the Certification Coordinating Committee has developed means for completing the ATI Certification Process, all approved by ATI members.

ATI as a professional international organization

In all of ATI’s work, we are guided by our Vision and Mission:

- To create and sustain open means of global communication for people to discuss, apply, research, and experiment with the discoveries of F. Matthias Alexander
- To encourage the use of the F. M. Alexander Technique in both human and environmental relationships
- To embody the principles of the F. M. Alexander Technique in ATI’s structure and means of operation
- To provide a means for recognizing Alexander Technique Teacher competence and providing certification for those teachers who qualify

¹ Australia (AUSTAT), Austria (GATOE), Belgium (AEFMAT), Brazil (ABTA), Canada (CANSTAT), Denmark (DFLAT), Finland (FINSTAT), France (APTA), Germany (ATVD), Israel (ISTAT), Mexico (APTAM) Netherlands (NeVLAT), New Zealand (ATTSNZ), Norway (NFLAT), South Africa (SASTAT), Spain (APTAE), Switzerland (SBAT/APS-TA), USA (AmSAT)

There are also organized groups of STAT-accredited teachers in the following countries: Japan (NSTAT) and Sweden (ATSVERIGE).

² According to purpose of PDC <https://www.alexandertechniqueinternational.org/teacher-competence>

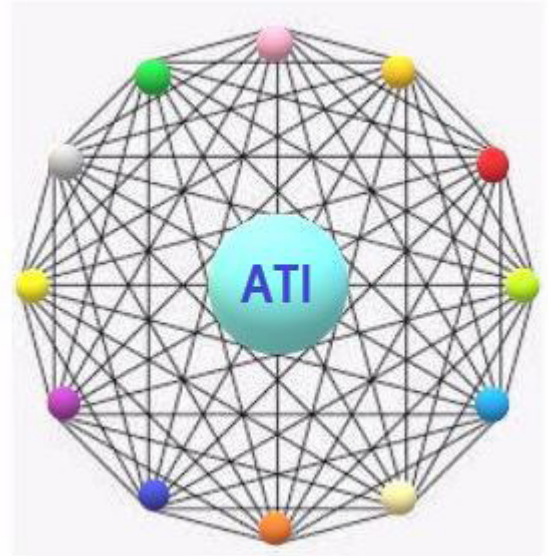


ATI on the rise

Beginning in 1992, a number of ATI members offered workshops, mainly in Europe, but also in Asia, and many Alexander Technique teachers from those countries joined ATI. However, ATI's support for these members, some of whom did not speak fluent English, was minimal. We did begin to translate ATI documents into French, German and Japanese and have since added Korean (and hopefully soon Spanish) but we did not, at that time, have the translation software and apps that we have today. We put the burden of coming to a conference, with its workshops and business meetings, and understanding what was happening on the non-native English speakers.

This realization motivated Rosa Luisa Rossi - ATI Co-Chair, in Spring 2020, to revitalize, renew, and deepen communication with all ATI members outside the United States. Thanks to the cooperation of Maria Weiss - ATI board member, this project continued to be launched in November 2020. Rosa Luisa and Maria divided all members of the twenty-two ATI member countries into twelve equivalent ATI country groups. The members of the USA were divided in two groups according to different time zones. Members of the groups met with Rosa Luisa and Maria in at least one Zoom meeting, where they collected wishes and ideas and explained the benefits of ATI membership.

Implementing the wishes of the members strengthened contact with the then 440 existing ATI



members within their different countries, about half of whom lived outside of the United States. We recorded the meetings and made the recordings available to any ATI members who were unable to attend the meetings. Through this engagement, a meaningful and supportive network formed within these countries and the two groups in the USA. During these meetings, existing and new coordinators agreed to work for their respective ATI national group.³

ATI Groups (national societies)	coordinators 2021	Meetings in 2021
ATI Group Australia	Chung, Li Cloe	March 28, 2021
ATI Group Austria (AT.AT)	Zidek-Etzlstorfer, Mag. Ursula	April 16, 2021
ATI Group Canada	Sinclair, Susan	February 22, 2021
ATI Group France (ATI France)	Vernerie, Catherine; Berninet, Maryse	March 11, 2021
ATI Group Germany (ATD)	Wilkins, Tamar	February 15, 2021
ATI Group Japan (JATS)	Ishitsubo, Sakiko; Kinomura, Akemi	February 26, 2021
ATI Group Latin America	Sandler, Clara	newly created group
ATI Group South Africa	Redpath, Sean	March 4, 2021
ATI Group South Korea	Kim, Seong-Eun	February 18, 2021
ATI Group United Kingdom	Walker, Lucia; Nobes, Peter	February 12, 2021
ATI Group United States	Calvey, Dana	March 30 and 31, 2021
ATI Group of small ATI member countries: Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland	Mikheeva, Alexandra	March 25, 2021

Russia will be added shortly as another ATI group.

A meaningful and supportive network formed within these countries, members within a single country having an opportunity to connect with each other. In the future, any connection among countries, e.g. France and Germany, or Japan and Korea, can form between two countries, or among several countries. In these Zoom meetings, members were able to express their needs for professional support. These suggestions were well received; we found that some already existed and others were implemented where possible. These suggestions include:

- Adjustment of membership fees to the standard of living in the respective country since January 2022. For collection of annual dues, ATI has adopted a three-tiered system.⁴ This system divides the countries represented in ATI into three categories based on the following indices: World Bank purchasing power parity, average

year	countries	countries	countries
2022	Tier 1 @ \$180	Tier 2 @ \$150	Tier 3 @ \$100
2023	Tier 1 @ \$200	Tier 2 @ \$167	Tier 3 @ \$111
	Australia	Austria	Brazil
	Canada	France	Greece
	Ireland	Germany	Hungary
	Japan	Israel	Latin America
	Norway	Italy	Romania
	Sweden	Korea	South Africa
	Switzerland	Netherlands	
	UK	New Zealand	
	USA		

³ List created by Maria Weiss 2022-02-06

⁴ Created by the working group "Parity of Fees" led by Sean Redpath



cost of an AT lesson, the cost-of-living comparison. A process has started to consider dual membership society fees.⁵

- A group-wide professional indemnity policy. This idea already exists in the United States and Canada
- Translations of texts. Offering live translations during the annual meetings and the workshops being offered is very important to the ATI membership.
- Financial support for organizing workshops through ATI Workshop Grants.
- Creation of virtual forums where members can find each other and connect. Separate forums were created on the ATI website, which enables collaboration on various projects to support the individual country groups. The various country groups can also use these forums to get in touch with each other and exchange information. In addition, the country coordinators have a separate forum through which they can exchange information with each other. These forums have direct access to all information on the ATI website and members can experience a sense of belonging as well as a sense of being connected and contributing to Alexander Technique International (ATI).

On the website, benefits for ATI members include:

- Google Translate, which makes it possible to translate all texts on the website into your own national language. This translation tool is becoming more and more reliable and supports the possibility of mutual exchange to an enormous extent.
- The ATI membership bulletin called the Communiqué is published twice a year before and after the AGM, and can be found on the website under Latest News. The Communiqué includes call for volunteers for a specific committee, book announcements, revisions, and more.
- A list of workshop offerings from fellow members can be found on the website under Upcoming Events.

Findings and experiences since 2020

ATI is currently deeply involved in inclusivity, and efforts are underway to give more attention and priority to those who are in the minority, particularly in countries outside the United States. Most ATI Group Zoom sessions are conducted in English. Only a few of the participants speak English. Google *speech* translate allows for communication to take place across languages. Hearing these different languages enriches the experience of being together and promotes multicultural awareness.

The respective zoom sessions were very much appreciated and as a result there was a willingness and curiosity to volunteer for ATI on a committee or for the board. Having new board and committee members has strengthened ATI, and helps it become a more diverse and multicultural organization.

Creative engagement

The ATI Committees are organized into five branches based on the common goals of the Committees, and work together and communicate regularly with each other. They share one liaison from the board.

Under the *Membership Services* branch, the Membership Committee (MC) and the International Committee (IC) work together.

New ideas and requests for ATI membership benefits were collected in the Zoom meetings and through a member survey. These ideas and requests include:

- Support members in marketing the Alexander Technique through
 - AT awareness weeks
 - advertising materials

⁵ Numbeo is the world's largest cost of living database. <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/>



- social media presence
- further training
- Easily find AT teachers on the world map
- Ongoing clarification as to whether international group liability insurance with ISMETA (International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association) is possible
- Build a library on the ATI website (including research papers, member articles, book recommendations in different languages, and reviews....)

The Membership Committee recently launched a creative initiative called “social hour.” This virtual gathering is primarily aimed at non-English speaking members, especially from Europe and Asia, so the meeting is scheduled for 2:00 p.m. in France and 8:00 a.m. on Saturday on the east coast of the US). For some it is (early) morning and for others (late) evening. This not only makes the multilingualism and multicultural internationality of ATI obvious, but also deepens personal connections to each other. The first “social hour” was attended by 14 ATI members from seven countries.

The International Committee is particularly concerned with translations of documents for the various languages used in ATI, and with providing interpreters when needed, so that all members can equally participate in ATI. As the “social hours” project is in its infancy, the International Committee has not yet had time to identify if and when translations will be needed for that project. This will be resolved after repeated “social hours”.

Challenges for ATI as an International Professional Organization

The personal view of what should happen in a professional organization, the distribution of roles as well as the working style can be different. Multilingualism and cultural differences are and will be a real challenge for ATI. Although it is stimulating to hear the different languages during the virtual sessions, at heart what is most important is understanding and patience for each other when working together.

Thoughts on the future of ATI

ATI’s central concern should be not only to maintain, but also to deepen the connection and support that ATI country groups have created. The ATI Membership Services Branch, which includes both the Membership Committee and the International Committee, work together in this endeavor and support one another to keep communication and collaboration with ATI groups alive. Thus, increasing newly won trust in the organization.

Every country has its own cultural structures as well as working styles. Some are strong in their ability to organize and create structure for an organization, while others have the gift of creating a warm atmosphere for communication and collaboration. These different qualities go hand in hand and support each other for the benefit of ATI. In today’s world, technical progress is developing at a remarkably quick pace. It is important to use these new opportunities in the best possible way, not only to support people in working with each other, but also in the functioning of the administrative level of this professional organization.

Conclusion

Inclusivity is ATI’s true core asset and will continue to set the tone for ATI in the future. ATI is now an internationally recognized professional organization, established worldwide thanks to its values and the quality of its work. It is therefore worth every effort to uphold ATI’s vision and mission to protect and support this valuable practice of the Alexander Technique for each individual and for the society as a whole.



Kinetic Thinking: A New Look at Orders and Direction in the Alexander Technique

By William Conable

You ask me to lift that chair. If I give consent that is all I can do.

“Teaching Aphorisms” in *Articles and Lectures* by F. M. Alexander (Mouritz, 1995, London), page 193

This is a whole new field of thinking.

Marjorie L. Barstow, personal communication

This essay floats on the surface of an ocean of inquiry that is very deep indeed. It does not deal with questions about the nature of thought and consciousness that have been and are now the object of a great deal of profound investigation in the fields of philosophy, particularly phenomenology and epistemology,¹ and in both theoretical and experimental psychology, particularly as regards Alexander’s discoveries.² I am essentially ignoring this important and fascinating work here. Instead, I am asserting that we all know quite a lot about thinking from a practical standpoint and likewise, that we sometimes make some assumptions about it that are unnecessarily limiting. I am proposing a revised map of some kinds of thinking that we do, adding what I am calling kinetic thinking to the usually acknowledged verbal, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and other types of thought. This has immediate practical advantages in clarifying some Alexander Technique concepts that can be confusing, and incidentally may suggest productive lines of research, which could eventually lead to a reevaluation of what I am saying here. Even acknowledging its highly limited scope however, I believe that considering what we do as teachers and students of Alexander’s discoveries in the light of this revised map can be constructive and revealing.

One of the most puzzling concepts in Alexander’s presentation of his discoveries is the idea of “orders.” Alexander Technique teachers often find communicating the concept of orders to students challenging. Students in their turn can be mystified by the concept and fall prey to the twin dangers of doing what teachers call “going for a feeling” or of verbally repeating “Neck free, head forward and up, back lengthen and widen” or some similar litany like a mantra, which sometimes seems effective but far more often fails. Perhaps Alexander meant something somehow different from simply repeating a verbal idea over and over until something happens.

People frequently assume that thinking is verbal: repeating or innovating words in the mind. It is useful to realize that there are many other types of thinking. Among them are the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Visual thinking involves remembering or creating pictures in the mind; auditory thinking similarly embraces imagined or remembered sounds. These modes are said to have various subcategories or so-called submodalities. Within visual thinking, for example, these submodalities include among others color, brightness, focus, size, distance, and so on.

Kinesthetic thinking is a large category that includes any thinking that is concerned with the body. It includes thoughts about, memories of, or imagination of tactile feeling, visceral sensation, and emotions, as well as that complex of perceptions more usually and more precisely defined as kinesthetic: the sense of the position, mass, and movement of the body and its parts. There is, however, another important type of

1 See Varella, Gallagher, Thompson et al.

2 Cacciatore, Johnston, Cohen et al.



thinking. It could be included in the kinesthetic cluster, since it involves the body, but it is clearly different from kinesthetic thinking as more narrowly defined to refer to body sensations. This is the thinking that leads to movement. I call it kinetic thinking, and it is the subject of this brief essay.

Try this experiment: raise your right hand. This could also be done by modeling the movement and asking someone else to mimic it. Obviously, doing this voluntarily involves thought on your part. But the thought cannot have been only verbal because you can think the words “Raise the right hand” without actually carrying out the activity. Similarly, if the cue to act was visual, the thought cannot have been only visual, because you can picture yourself carrying out the act without actually doing so. Similar observations can be made about imagining the feeling of the action.

There must be another kind of thinking that leads to activity. We do it all the time, but we are mostly unaware of doing it and we have no common way to talk about it. For this reason, I have proposed a new term for it: kinetic thinking. Kinetic thinking is the thinking that leads to movement. In the simple experiment above, verbal (or visual) thoughts are translated by the brain into kinetic thoughts, which eventuate in movement. It is this mode of thinking that Alexander seems to have identified.

One important movement that he observed was what he first called “the Primary Movement” and later, “the Primary Control.” He verbalized this movement as “Neck free, head forward and up, back lengthen and widen.” This phrase is sometimes extended to include such things as “knees out and away.” Making this movement leads to changes in specific activities as well as changes to sensations, but it precedes or supports those activities, and is not the same as the resulting sensations. As we have demonstrated with the “Raise your right hand” experiment, it cannot be manufactured as a feeling or by repeating words.

Alexander realized that in order to solve his problems he would have to practice what I am calling kinetic thinking, consciously and purposely. He called it “ordering,” and in a real sense it was what he meant by “considering the means-whereby.” This thinking would be necessary for restructuring habits of movement. It is also sometimes referred to as “directing,” which brings its own problems, because “direction” has two senses. The first sense is direction in space or time, that is up, left, north, later. The second sense is instruction, which is the sense in which Alexander used it: “I direct (i.e. instruct) my head to move forward and up.” Conflating the two senses often engenders confusion for Alexander practitioners. Is direction ordering, or is it “forward and up”?

You can sense the results of habits of movement by doing kinesthetic perception, as well as by watching yourself, for instance in a mirror. However, you can understand their cause only by being aware of the kinetic thoughts involved, and you can change them only by doing kinetic thinking. Alexander called this type of thought “giving orders” or “directing.” Sometimes he also used the word wish: “I wish my neck to be free, etc.” Getting students to be aware of this type of thinking and to be consciously fluent in it is implied in the title of his second main book, *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*. Lack of clarity about this concept is one of the main problems in teaching people to utilize Alexander’s discoveries.

It is also noteworthy that some kinds of Alexandrian inhibition can be understood as a form of kinetic thinking. One can sit or lie quietly, and notice chronically tensed muscles and then purposely release them, as described, for instance, by Theodore Dimon in his recent online book *The Body in Action*.³ While this chronic tension may arise many ways, this release is in itself a movement, and thus is accomplished by kinetic thinking.

3 <https://www.alexandertechniqueprinciples.com/chapter02-exercises>



Identifying kinetic thinking as a separate mode of thought has proven in my experience to be a helpful strategy. We need to learn to identify it and direct it consciously. When we do so, we stop trying to use Alexander's discoveries by means of other modes of thought. We don't try to make pictures, get feelings, or rehearse verbal instructions over and over. The part of the brain that talks about things is not the same part of the brain that is responsible for movement,⁴ and when we try to use the talking part of the brain directly to produce movement, whether the so-called "Primary Control," or any other activity, we are bound to interfere with our natural freedom and efficiency. Realizing that orders are kinetic thinking, teachers can give much clearer instructions. Students can understand more clearly. And both can concentrate their efforts on the real issues: doing and practicing conscious and appropriately directed thinking, and inhibiting the old unsatisfactory habits that need to be changed.

4 I am obliged to Shawn Copeland for this formulation.

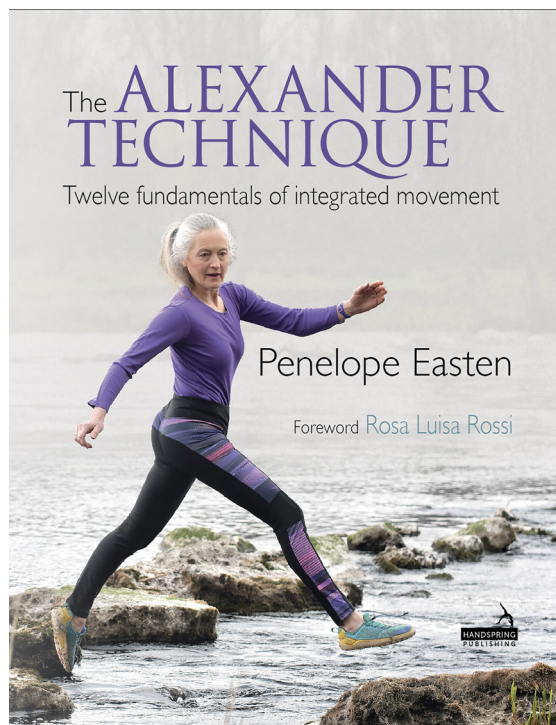


Book In Review

By Robin Gilmore

The ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE: Twelve fundamentals of integrated movement
by Penelope Easten
Handspring Publishing 2021

Upon receiving my copy of Penelope Easten's book, my eyes and mind lingered on the front cover, a beautifully dynamic photo of the author caught airborne as she leaps from stone to stone. Her torso and limbs spiral in balanced opposition. Her bright-eyed gaze is neither in the direction she is headed nor down at the choppy water below her feet, but off to the side as if something on the shore has caught her attention without affecting her gait. The silver hair conveys that this is a woman of maturity and my first thought was "Who wouldn't want to move like that?" The cover also reveals that the forward is written by Rosa Luisa Rossi, someone I've known and admired for many years who is currently Co-Chair of the ATI Board of Directors. With high expectations I began what proved to be an interactive journey through text, photos, illustrations and numerous movement explorations. This is a book meant to be experienced as much as read.



Throughout the book, Easten references Margaret Goldie, one of the few of Alexander teachers who began teaching before F. M. Alexander officially started his teacher training program. For AT teachers and trainees, it's worth noting that the First Generation included some who learned from more of an apprenticeship model than a structured school. "Miss Goldie" had powerful hands, but she also emphasized the importance of thinking in a particular way. "Your mind is in the brain, and your brain is in the head" was Goldie's way of steering her pupils away from fixating on their bodies. Easten uses "mind in the brain" as a shorthand cue for what might be described as conscious awareness of oneself in activity in relation to the surrounding environment. She repeats the cue throughout the book to stave off fixing or glazing over. Another "Goldie-ism" is one I have heard from various AT teachers over the years and am happy to now know the source: "Come to quiet" encompasses calming the nervous system and allowing time for muscles to do less in carrying out movement.



The book is written in three parts but does not have to be read chronologically. In fact, Easten suggests working through the chapters and explorations as one chooses, in particular Parts 2 and 3. Part 1, The Basics of Fundamental Movement, gives an overview of the material and some of the history of AT. The twelve fundamentals are grouped into structural, sensory and consciousness subsets. Over time all are meant to be incorporated into a holistic approach. In the chapter on breathing Easten writes “You may notice that as you find your natural breathing, you also come to quiet, your eyes focus, you become more spatially aware and embodied. We are self-organizing, whole-body, networking structures, so that working with one fundamental will often bring all the others into play” p 111.

Each fundamental is presented separately with accompanying explorations. As summarized on page 24, the three categories of fundamentals encompass:

- Structural: a fully functional body, balanced with dynamic modulation of postural tone, poised for action.
- Sensory: spatial awareness: of the body and environment, and orientation to gravity.
- Consciousness: clear choices from the brain/embodied intelligence.

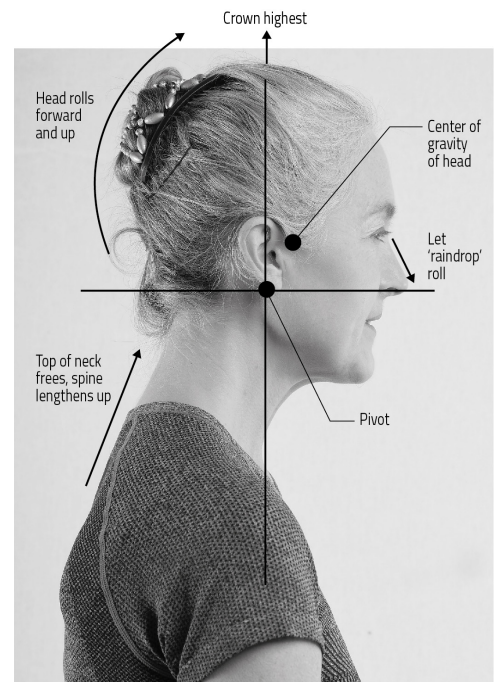
The explorations in Part 1 include simple movements and sensory awareness activities, many of which will be familiar to AT students and teachers. These include sitting, walking, semi-supine and basic anatomy including the atlanto-occipital joint. For the most part Easten avoids Alexander jargon and offers clear, descriptive language that includes some imagery and references to human developmental movement. An effective image that recurs multiple times, “raindrop,” is introduced as follows. As with most of the explorations, there are one or more illustrations presented for visual reference.

Exploration 3.8 Rebalancing the head on the neck (atlanto-occipital joint)

Place your forefingers in the hollows under the ears. Imagine a “raindrop” rolling slowly down your nose and LET the head very gently roll forwards following this imaginary “raindrop.” Be aware of how the head rotates forwards somewhere between your fingers, and there is a gentle stretch just under your skull, p 43

As a seasoned AT teacher, I always appreciate the chance to be a student, so I tried each exploration briefly (but not in a hurry!) and found the instructions easy to follow. Easten recommends videotaping and repeating the exercises over time. Given the deadline to write this review I could not devote weeks and months to the material. I will also mention here that many of the explorations are linked by QR codes to short videos. In order to stay true to reviewing a BOOK, I chose not to view any videos until after finishing the text. I really wanted to see if the instructions could be followed by readers of all levels of AT experience. That is indeed the case. The handful of videos that I watched after the fact proved to be equally easy to follow. Easten’s voice is clear and well-paced.

Part 2, Linking Brain and Body with Explorations of Physical Integration begins with guidance and a reminder that this book is not a summer beach read. Easten instructs, “As you dive into Part 2, your body may take time to find all the new body geometry and adjust to it. Do alternate with Part 3 chapters as needed, to balance inhibitory and directional activity” p 125. Before introducing these potentially



challenging (and perhaps controversial) explorations, Easten provides a fascinating history of Alexander, both the man and his technique. The early stages of Alexander's own education and development are not necessarily those contained in his infamous "Evolution of a Technique" chapter in *The Use of the Self* (1932). Without wading too deeply into AT politics and pedagogical "camps," I must say that this more inclusive timeline gave me new insight into some of the longstanding territoriality in our field. Having trained AT teachers for many years, I would recommend Easten's enlightening history of AT become required reading for all trainees.

The substantial remaining sections of Part 2 contain movement explorations, some of which may not be everyone's cup of tea. Again, I had a go at each exercise, and I'm a highly skilled mover with decades of AT experience from a wide range of mentors. The material credited to Jeando Masoero, "Initial Alexander" holds no appeal for me, and frankly I disagree with the postural alignment model. I reject the assertion that upright humans are not meant to have a lumbar curve. The notion that the sternum should be vertical is dumbfounding. To this observer the images demonstrating this method look distorted and effortful. Although Easten frequently reminds readers to think first and do less, I can envision some people actually hurting themselves by forcing their bodies into a specified shape. No human is symmetric, and we all have innate structures that must be respected. On that cautionary note, I shall decline this particular cup of tea.

I found the chapters on balance and walking to be quite engaging and fun. In setting up an indoor pathway of books to step onto, I looked again at the author's cover photo and imagined I, too, was crossing a brook while wishing to keep my feet dry. The chapter on spatial relationships and use of the arms contains detailed anatomy and directionality. Here and elsewhere, Easten includes material from Thomas Myers' *Anatomy Trains*. Through dissection Myers identified unbroken lines of myofascial "trains" that run along most if not all of the length of the body. Thinking of these lines lengthening and spiraling can bring about a full-body experience that overrides the traditional anatomic approach of looking at the body in segments.

Not until Chapter 14, nearly three quarters of the way through *The Alexander Technique* does freeing the neck make an appearance. This late arrival may surprise many AT practitioners as many of us have heard some variation of "let the neck be free" innumerable. Easten doesn't negate the importance of a free neck for optimum coordination. She builds a case for the quality of the neck region as a kind of barometer for the whole person including both physical and mental/emotional states. Like all vertebrates, humans have protective reflexes that trigger patterns of contraction. The freeze or startle reflex happens below the level of consciousness, and not until the animal/human feels safe will the neck truly let go.

The head/neck region is comprised of multiple structures including the vocal mechanism, tongue and major sensory organs. To engage with the world, we can be led by sight, sound, smell or other choices. The phrase "head leads, body follows" is used by many Alexander teachers including myself. I was fortunate to study with Marjorie Barstow for a number of years, and she used that phrase countless times in relation to any activity. In order for the head to lead the body into efficient, well-balanced movement, the neck must be free. Easten concludes Chapter 14 with ELEVEN ways to free the neck including the aforementioned "mind in the brain" and "raindrop." Something for everyone!

Part 3, *Living in a Flow of Dynamic Balance*, begins with two chapters that draw deeply from Easten's work with Miss Goldie. She states that the core of Goldie's work was "that of coming to quiet, from which one can move into the unknown and something new can come about" p 291. The bulk of Chapter 15 utilizes a series of explorations about catching (or not catching) a ball to build an understanding of Alexander's inhibition as an active, conscious process rather than a deadening stop. The ball represents a stimulus that may "model... our responses to life." Much of this practice entails overtly deciding not to catch the ball and monitoring one's responses as the stimulus passes by. I appreciate Easten's acknowledgement that ball catching can be



loaded with conscious or unconscious memories from childhood that even in adults can trigger reactions of fear, shame, or ineptitude. These emotional responses are just as much a part of our response as muscles tightening. Developing “inhibition in action” requires patience and a true letting go of expectations brought about by coming to quiet.

Quiet is not asleep. Quiet is completely conscious, completely present. Then when a simple decision is made to catch, the hand and arm respond so economically. In that moment we are not mentally aware of our movement; it seems to happen of its own volition. We can feel surprised that the ball is now in the hand. Compared to the initial, over-stimulated and protective movement in response to the first pretend throw, this movement could not be more different. It is so beautiful it can make one laugh. p 296

Chapter 16, *New models of coordination and learning*, provides an overview of neuroscience and motor science in locomotion and everyday arm movements and looks at how AT can be applied to learning a complex activity such as dance or playing music. Here and earlier in the book, Easten offers concise explanations of scientific principles in easily understood language. She has done extensive reading and research that is a major gift to the Alexander community at large. She generously credits a number of teachers and scholars and states clearly when she is positing an idea that has yet to be fully researched. The text offers fundamental information on brain maps, motor maps, and other aspects of the nervous system and includes many citations and a four page list of references worthy of a doctoral dissertation.

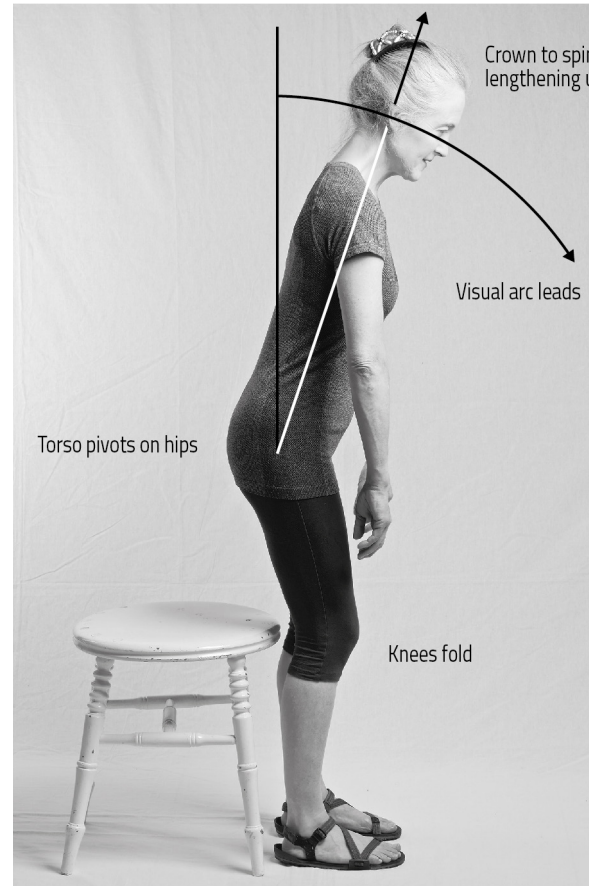
Real world interlude: As I write from my home in Annapolis, MD within view of the Chesapeake Bay, I am toggling between the computer screen and the view outside my window. At the moment there is a snowy egret on the hunt for fish. Pausing and absolutely alert. Now a step, now an elegant extension of neck led by long tapered beak. Earlier I saw this giant bird erupt into flight in a great unfurling. Who wouldn't want to move like that?

Now of course water fowl and other animals have brains quite different from humans. For the most part they simply do not interfere with their coordination. There are indeed people who move beautifully through life, and then there are the rest of us who might benefit from the Alexander technique. Rather than providing a cure for a particular ailment, with AT

...we can inhibit automated cortico-centric habits, so that our innate movement patterns re-emerge, giving smooth, easy movement from dynamic modulation of postural tone. We can stay calmer for longer in response to the stimuli of life. All this brings about an ease and coordination of movement that most people do not even dream of doing. p 315-316

Well, why not?

(Cue trumpets.) Long ago and far away there lived a man who dreamed of reciting Shakespeare...I'll



venture a guess that readers of this publication will know some version of that particular origin story. Suffice to say that if the man had not cared so much about speaking LOUDLY we would not have an Alexander technique. On top of that, F. M. was born prematurely and likely had poor breathing coordination from birth that involved excess tension but kept him alive. The penultimate chapter of Penelope Easten's considerable book delivers *Embodied Speaking*.

Easten's own vocal challenges began at a young age as a self-described shy teenager lacking the self-confidence to speak in social settings. Rather alarmingly, her earliest Alexander lessons only exacerbated the problem. To her ethical credit, Easten does not name names, but she does say that those supposedly qualified Alexander teachers did not address her breathing nor introduce the whispered 'ah.' Fortunately, she cast her net more widely and found Miss Goldie as well as other AT and voice teachers. For Easten, "Speaking, almost more than any other activity, involves the whole of us. Not just our physical being, but including our expression of ourselves as we relate to our world" p. 325

I concur with that statement whole-heartedly because as a dancer I never had to rely on my voice until the 1980s when post-modern choreographers wanted dancers to speak or sing! Three cheers for musical theater performers, but for this classically trained dancer using my voice on stage was terrifying. Some of my most powerful, cathartic lessons with Marj Barstow came on the days when I mustered the courage to sing in front of a group. I might as well have been naked, and many tears were shed. Now I'm a confident speaker and love to sing. I thoroughly enjoyed Easten's embodied speaking activities. Here are the titles of some of those explorations. I invite the reader to say each one aloud and PAUSE between each title. Perhaps do a whispered ah or two before reading ahead.

- Slowing down one's speech
- Envisaging what you say before you speak it
- Explore not smiling and laughing as you speak
- Taking the whispered Ah down the body
- Letting words ride on the breath
- Connect and speak to everyday objects from your whole being

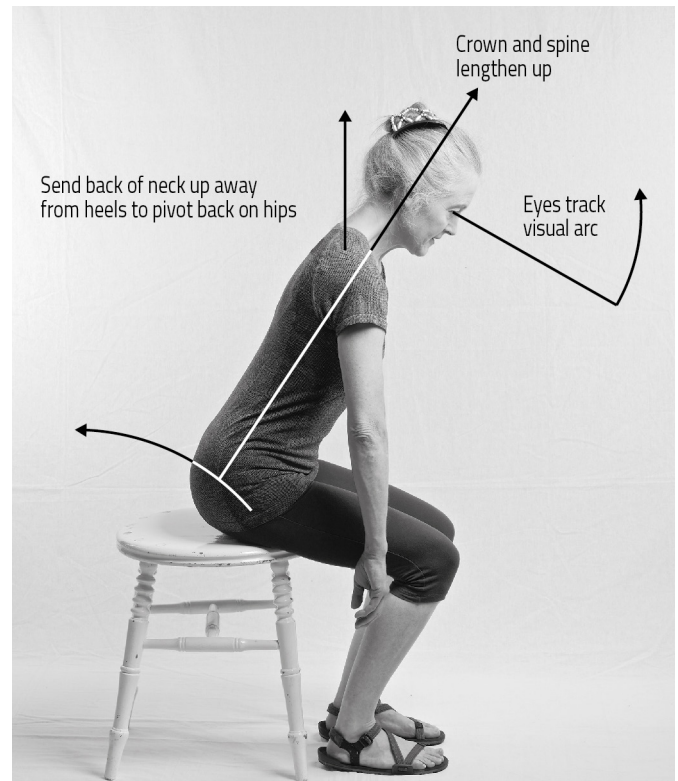
And, find your grounding and wait for it:

- Speaking a poem from the perineum

Like me, your first thought upon reading that last entry might have been "is Penelope Easten asking me to speak out of my butt?" Reader, you'll have to get your answer from the source.

Pause to check on the egret. Ha, another tasty fish down that long, free gullet!

Now in 2022, humanity may or may not be emerging from a global pandemic. When everything shut down in March 2020 or thereabouts, Alexander teachers and other hands-on practitioners faced a chasm.



The early adapters had already figured out methods of teaching online, but many of us had never considered it a possibility. As a student of Marj Barstow I knew how to teach without hands, but I desperately missed the in-person interactions and having touch as an option. The Alexander Technique-Twelve fundamentals of integrated movement concludes with a brief chapter on putting hands on or being in proximity to others. Therapeutic and educational touch has existed for hundreds, if not thousands, of years wherever humans have gathered in communal settings. Only in recent decades have scientists had the curiosity or the tools to study just what is going on in these potent interactions. Easten capsulizes some of this research in a discussion of attunement, resonance and mirror neurons and offers a final batch of explorations.

Unlike most of the previous explorations that are solo investigations, these require a willing partner. Effective educators, therapists and healers employ the skills and qualities herein. For those who are highly intuitive, they might not have language to describe why they are successful in their vocation; they just know what works and are able to adapt to a diverse spectrum of clients. Penelope Easten has broken down what can seem to be mysterious, overarching powers into tangible, applicable skills that can be learned if one has the desire and patience. She concludes, “Each moment is an exploration into the unknown. Always be an explorer, as you discover the rewards of fully integrated movement for yourself, and for your pupils or clients” (p. 344).

Come to quiet.



WPC at Work - 30 Years of ATI in 2022

On Behalf of the Workshop Planning Committee

Special thanks to Lucia Walker, Marilou Chacey, Morgan Ford Bruncketurner, and Sara Goldstein who comprise the Workshop Planning Committee along with Maria Weiss and Rosa Louisa Rossi who are the Site Coordinators for the Annual Conference and General Meeting this year. We are disappointed about the cancellation of the Berlin ATI event but understand that this was beyond the control of the committees. Much appreciation to Sara Goldstein who wrote a great article for the ExChange about the excitement and enthusiasm surrounding the Berlin event, including voices from across our organization. Further Sara's attention in her article as well as the focus of the ACGM on ATI's celebration of thirty years, is clear and will no doubt influence the year to come. An excerpt from Sara's article includes the voice of Tania Canas, who is the co-chair of the International Committee as well as a Membership Committee member. Tania Canas says:

...we have been meeting with the different country groups that form...ATI. As a result of these meetings and leading up to our 30th Anniversary, I am looking forward to the finalized video introducing us to all these different countries and the sharing of the cultural highlights from our international community, working toward a more inclusive ATI. I am also looking forward to our first hybrid ACGM....

After two years of pandemic culture, I know that there are many people eager to be in fellowship and physical proximity. While the first hybrid conference remains elusive, virtual interactions provide easy access to our global community and allow us to imagine and create new ways of being together. Stay tuned for more information about the virtual conference in October! The exact dates are still to be determined. The WPC will be calling for proposals for that event soon and keeping us on the hook with some of the great ideas and opportunities for interaction with each other and our ideas. Perhaps this is the time to reach out to a colleague in a different part of the world from you and work together for a workshop or presentation.



ExChange: Call for Submissions

ExChange, the journal of Alexander Technique International, is calling for submissions of scholarly articles, book reviews, and creative essays.

The past two years of experiences with a global pandemic have given us pause to consider our work: to reflect, reimagine, revel, and make revelations about ourselves as AT practitioners, teachers, and ambassadors. What are you learning about yourself? What are you learning about or from your work? What challenges, grounding, or buoyancy has AT provided as you move through our current world?

For publication in the December 2022 issue please submit by September 15, 2022.

Rolling submissions for future ExChange issues

Submission Requirements:

- Please organize your work in a Microsoft Word document and PDF
- Title your submission with your last name and an abbreviated title (include full title in the document itself)
- Photos included need to be in jpeg format
- Send your work as attachments to the email: ATIExChangeEditor@gmail.com

Tips for Submission:

- Submissions should be less than 6,000 words (concessions can be made on a case-by-case basis)
- Some submissions may roll over to a later issue if they need more time for processing
- Submitting early is always welcome!
- Direct questions to Julie Mulvihill, Editor of the ExChange: ATIExChangeEditor@gmail.com

