

## ***What is the Alexander Technique?***

The Alexander Technique is a practical way to become aware of—and let go of—tensions that interfere with our freedom of movement in activity, as well as our ability to respond effectively to the events of our lives. Such tension makes activity—and even just *being*—heavy and effortful, leading over time to fatigue and injury. When we remove that interference, the ease and pleasure in being and movement that we enjoyed as children re-emerge.

Lessons in the Alexander Technique help you become aware of habitual (but usually overlooked) patterns of tension and show how you can gently interrupt them. As your body and your mind gain space and flexibility, you discover you are more present, more expressive, more empowered to define and accomplish your goals, more compassionate with yourself and others, more able to listen, more in tune with your life.

### ***What happens in an AT lesson?***

Alexander Technique lessons are not strenuous and require no special clothing. Loose, comfortable clothes that allow you to move easily and lie down are recommended. The teacher will introduce you to a new awareness of your thinking and moving, through a combination of gentle hands-on contact and verbal guidance, tablework, and exploration of simple activities such as sitting, standing, and walking, as well as activities from your life.

All Alexander Technique lessons are based on a few simple principles. For example, you'll learn that ease of coordination depends on an effortless poise of your head on your neck.

Change happens because you're learning through experience. You're encouraged to ask questions and explore what you're experiencing. In turn, the teacher will draw your attention to various aspects of the activity that you've probably overlooked in the past, such as how you "get set" to move and how such psychological and physical "sets" limit your choices.

### ***Who Studies the AT?***

Students come to the Alexander Technique for many reasons and at any age—to improve at golf or singing; to relieve back pain or repetitive stress injuries; to cope better with the demands of raising children, a chronic illness, or working at a computer. We learn how to "use" ourselves more easily, patiently, and effectively—in other words, how to be in our bodies with more grace.

Over the century since F.M. Alexander developed his Technique, it has been added to the curricula of such drama and music schools as Juilliard and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, and has attracted many well-known students, including actors Kevin Kline and Kenneth Branagh, writer Aldous Huxley, educational philosopher John Dewey (who wrote prefaces to three of Alexander's books), and ethologist Niko Tinbergen, who devoted half of his Nobel Prize acceptance speech to its praise.

**Andrea Matthews** is a graduate of the Alexander Technique Center at Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is also a Certified Teaching Member and past Corresponding Secretary of Alexander Technique International, and is currently the editor of ATI's journal, **ExChange**.

A graduate of Princeton University, a member of the voice faculty at Wellesley College, and a critically acclaimed soprano, she continues to appear in opera and orchestra concerts around the world. Her wide-ranging interests and abilities make her uniquely suited to present the Alexander Technique to a wide variety of audiences and individual students.



## **The Alexander Technique is . . .**

A way of becoming aware and letting go of tension throughout your body.

A re-education, so that you learn how to use your body in a more appropriate way, and avoid putting stress on the bones, joints and internal organs.

A process by which you get to know yourself better, not only physically but also mentally and emotionally as well.

A way of making real choices in your life, rather than reacting habitually to any given situation.

A way of understanding how the body is naturally designed to work, and learning how to stop interfering with these natural functions.

A technique which you can practise, with the help of lessons, that can bring about harmony and contentment in your life.

Richard Brennan, *The Alexander Technique Manual* (1996), p. 18