

What happens in an Alexander Technique Lesson?

It is the teacher's job to structure a progressive series of lessons, specific to the pupil's needs. The content and presentation of lessons varies greatly between individuals. Initially, the teacher will discuss what has brought the student to the Alexander Technique. This may include questions about pain, medical history, relevant issues with work or a specialised skill. This information is always held in strictest confidence.

Before working with specialised skills or specific issues, it is important to establish a general positive attitude of the body, to use as a basis of co-ordination to more complex tasks. The teacher uses verbal instructions to bring about changes in the student, as well as using their hands (with the student's consent) to help pupils interpret what is being asked. The touch is non-invasive, usually very light. Manipulation is not part of Alexander Technique.

The student is asked to engage with the tactile stimulus the teacher's hand offers, and co-operate by entertaining a certain quality of awareness. As the lesson progresses, the teacher and student together devise a constructive method of thinking, which the student can use outside the lesson. The teacher's contact brings awareness to subconscious habits, and has proved to be the most efficient way for the pupil to embody a new manner of movement.

The traditional way to begin learning application of the Alexander principles is sitting and standing from a chair, and lying down with the teacher working with you. The chair provides a practical way for the teacher to give students an experience of using themselves in a way which differs to their habit. We spend a great deal of time during the day sitting, so it is also a useful place to learn to refine coordination. The teacher has the student lie on a table to give them a supported place to work with releasing accumulated tensions. With more release, the skills students' learn in the lesson become easier to apply.

Other educational tools add variety to the teaching of the technique. Teachers might use balance plates or fit balls, may work with the student in postures similar to yoga, on all fours or with movement progressions such as Dart procedures.

One of the aims of the technique is to be able to apply it in activity. This means that the benefits accrued in the lesson will continue to be promoted while the student is on their own. Students are encouraged to work with activity at various stages in the course of lessons. Common activities range from musical performance and public speaking to sports, housework or computer work.

As with any skill, Alexander Technique takes some commitment and engagement for it to be of use to the student. It differs from therapy in that the student is not passive, and differs from exercise because the skill learnt in Alexander Technique deals with co-ordination on more fundamental levels and is something which can be applied in daily activity.

Sometimes profound change happens in the first lesson, but the skill of Alexandrian thinking takes time to embody, and longstanding habits or conditions will take time to unravel. It is generally considered that 10 lessons give the student a practical understanding of the principles, and 30 gives enough accumulated input for him or her to competently apply the principles without the teacher. By this stage most students are aware of fundamental changes brought about by the technique.

Sessions are 45 or 60 minutes and are weekly, two or three times a week by arrangement with the teacher. It is usual to work without shoes. Because a lesson involves moving, and usually some work with the student lying, skirts or dresses are not appropriate and it is preferable for students not to wear sleeveless tops.

Please don't hesitate to phone or email for more information.