

Alexander Technique: Overview

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MUSIC

Overview

Your body and how you use it are integral to your musicianship. The Alexander Technique improves the quality and longevity of musical performance. Making music requires repetitive actions, which can be done either poorly or with ease. The Alexander Technique allows you to sing or play with ease, supports a broader range of expressiveness, and helps maintain the health of your body.

History of the Alexander Technique

F. Matthias Alexander was an actor in the 1800s. He began experiencing vocal fatigue injuries, which led him to investigate his movement patterns. Using mirrors from all angles, he observed his body posture and discovered that his alignment was inefficient.



The components of the Alexander Technique include awareness, inhibition, and direction.

Awareness is 90% of the work. This involves body mapping, primary patterns, and startle patterns.

Primary Pattern

- The quality of use we are born with, which lasts until about age 5.
- The body is in the primary direction.

Startle Pattern

- Used to respond to life-threatening situations.
- When startle patterns become chronic and ineffective, they lead to patterns of misuse.
- The head rocks upward, and the body curls inward.

Inhibition

Inhibition is a positive letting go to achieve a primary pattern of movement. Chronic tension disappears, and ineffective habitual responses begin to fade away.

Allow

Making yourself do something is a habit. If you allow yourself to choose what you do, it creates a productive neurological experience.

Primary Alexander Directions

- Neck is free
- Head is forward and up
- Back is long and wide
- Jaw, arms, hands, and feet are released



Learning How to Re-pattern

Body mapping helps us understand how our muscles, bones, and mind are connected. The concept of mapping in relation to the body was developed by Barbara and Bill Conable.

Primary Pattern

We use our bodies intelligently and efficiently. Our minds stay easily in the moment, which brings presence, focus, and receptivity.

Trauma can affect our primary pattern. Trauma can range from car accidents to childhood falls. Part of the Alexander Technique is asking why the body uses specific patterns of movement.

Concrete operational thinking develops in middle school, helping us create a more differentiated identity.

This mode of thinking also allows us to become lost in thoughts about the past or future, which pulls us away from the present moment. The Alexander Technique is about being present in the moment.

Startle Pattern

- The body's response to a threat.
- The body pulls to the midline.
- 30% of the population does not pull inward but has an outward pattern known as the Moro reflex.

Anatomy

The bottom of the spine connects to the hips. The location of the hip joints is often misunderstood.

Constructive rest can help you understand where the motion of the hips begins. The leg muscles start in the central part of your lower back. If your knees are locked, it can affect your back and breathing. Float the top of the AO joint and work downward through the body.

Breathing

The diaphragm is anchored at the lumbar spine and balloons up, attaching beneath the ribs. When the diaphragm descends, the lower torso must be allowed to expand on all sides. There are three parts of the breathing cycle:

1. Inhalation
2. Exhalation
3. Suspension of breath

