**Principles of the Alexander Technique**

**Awareness**

The conscious act of noticing oneself in rest and in movement.

Examples of Awareness questions.

What do I notice in my body? Where am I working? Do I need to be working in myself this hard?

How am I thinking in this moment? Am I giving up trying to do something or am I fixed on some sort of goal?

**Inhibition**

Inhibition is giving oneself a conscious mental direction that you have a choice NOT to do an activity. It is the thought process that prohibits excessive neuro-muscular activity from activating, allowing for a new and more efficient movement to take its place.

There is a common misconception that it takes a long time to inhibit. Engaging effectively with inhibition can be done in a split second.

Examples of Inhibition and Awareness.

Give yourself the stimulus to walk. Say out loud “I’m going to start walking”…..then immediately speak out loud….”NO…. I have a choice NOT to.”

Practice this three times. See if you can notice any physical tightening happening in your neck, back, or limbs. It’s okay if you can’t! At this point you’re just engaging in a thought experiment and taking in whatever data presents itself to you.

The same experiment can be run with literally any activity that you do! Reaction to any stimulus will trigger your habits of movement automatically. By practicing giving yourself the stimulus to DO an activity, then thinking out loud that you have a choice NOT to do that activity. You are strengthening your brains inhibitory function in every context.

**Direction**

Direction is the subtle wish to come out of the tension patterns that are placing excessive strain on your head, neck, and back.

It is important to note that while direction is an extremely powerful and effective tool to sustainably improve your postural tone in rest and in movement. It is entirely dependent on Awareness and Inhibition to be in place in order for Direction to be effective.

Always remember, Direction is simply a wish to relax the whole neck starting at the top vertebrae, located between your ears and way behind the bridge of your nose. Wish your neck to be free so the head can release forward and up away from your tail, allowing the back to undo up into length and width.

If one is not aware of how they are thinking, it is quite easy to try and DO a direction and try to place yourself into a certain space, which at best is useless and at worse harmful.

Examples of Awareness, Inhibition, and Direction in Action.

Give yourself the stimulus to walk as previously explained and practice saying out loud “NO…I have a choice NOT to walk.” Then give the wishful intention to relax the neck, to allow the head to release forward and up into space (the forward simply refers to a slight rotation of the head at the top joint in between the ears, the UP refers to the crown of the head then releasing straight up in space.) to allow the whole back to undo into length and width.

Examples of How We Can Go Wrong With Direction.

Notice when you give yourself directions; is there any attempt to directly move or lift yourself up into space? (If so, simply notice it and ask to let go of the attempt)

Notice when giving direction, are you giving the intention with ZERO expectation of any specific response or are you HOPING to feel some sort of change or relief?

(If the latter, celebrate noticing it and ask to let go of that expectation. Lightly and repeatedly give the direction for your neck to free, so that your head can release forward and up, so that your back can lengthen and widen.)

Be grateful for any positive change that you might feel when combining Awareness, Inhibition, and Direction, but DO NOT cross into expecting a particular kinesthetic response from your thinking. This is an End-Gain that serves only as an interference to your further development.

Most of what I consider effective practice in this process of thinking is simply noticing when you have gone too far in your thinking and moved from *Indirect* thinking into *Direct* action and making the adjustment as needed.

Conclusion

The process just described in detail is cumulative in nature. The more you engage with this process, the easier and more readily you can rely on it. It is a general form of thinking that CAN and SHOULD be applied to every activity you do.

Ultimately, it is the students responsibility to take accountability for the patterns that are giving them trouble, and engage with Awareness, Inhibition, and Direction as honestly as they can, and as frequently as they can.

There is no end to the road you travel, but it is a road worth traveling. Go after the Indirect method!