**Alexander Technique**

**History**

At the turn of the century an Australian actor named Frederick Mathias (F.M.) Alexander developed a hoarseness that threatened to bring his career to a permanent finale. Voice and medical specialists offered him no specific diagnosis and no treatment was effective. Alexander noticed that his loss of voice occurred only during performance. He decided that he must be misusing himself physically in some way when he performed.

To determine the cause, he observed himself reciting literature in front of mirrors for months. Through detailed observation and experimentation, he came to believe that he had identified several habitual patterns of thought and movement that were maintaining his loss of voice.

After identifying these patterns, he developed a technique whereby he could inhibit the old habitual patterns and consciously direct new choices of thought and movement, resulting in a decrease in overall muscular tension, increased balance and coordination, and clearer thinking.

A by-product of this holistic approach, or “attending to the use of the self” as he called it, was the disappearance of Alexander’s vocal problems.

Alexander’s recovery attracted the attention of many other performers. He was launched into a career in vocal instruction. Soon after moving his practice to Melbourne, the medical community took an interest in his technique and began to send him patients suffering from various respiratory illnesses.

As Alexander’s successes multiplied, so did his renown. Before long, more of his students presented for medical reasons than for performance training. In 1904 Alexander moved his practice to England. Until his death in 1955, at the age of 87, he traveled between England and America refining his technique, training others as teachers, and writing books.

Alexander was a pioneer in the concept of holistic treatment of the individual. Today it is increasingly common for treatments to follow a more biopsychosocial approach. In Alexander’s day however, the concept that a person’s cognition could affect their physical functioning and general health was just beginning to be explored.

Since Alexander’s death, his technique has been taught throughout the world. Today there are thousands of certified Alexander Technique (AT) teachers worldwide.