

# ExChange

Journal of Alexander Technique International

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# Renewal





## From Co-Editor MaryJean Allen

As my husband John and I drove along the highway in Jasper National Park, Alberta, Canada, we stopped to take a photo. This issue's theme is inspired by that beautiful nature scene of renewal.

"Nature often holds up a mirror so we can see more clearly the ongoing processes of growth, renewal, and transformation in our lives." ~ Mary Ann Brussat



## From Co-Editor Kathy Privatt

Just a few days ago I, once again, enjoyed the ceremony of graduation and the hugs afterwards with my students. This year had an added bonus however, as several sophomores and juniors attended and came by with grand summer plans and budding excitement for fall. Closure on one chapter makes room for renewal in another. We wish the same for all of you.

## From This Chair



Fiona Cranwell

Renewal is happening all the time, everywhere. With each breath we renew the life and energy in us. Our cells are dying and regenerating in our bodies as we sit here. Every wave the sea lands on the shore washes the sands, anew. Clouds pass and the sun shines. The clouds return and the rain refreshes the land. The earth breathes and feeds and allows growth. Constantly, quietly, poetically.

For us in Alexander Technique we use our understanding of inhibition to creatively destroy habits so new whole ways come about to move and think and be. This is a momentary practice in refreshing and renewing our thinking, our connection, our coordination. Repeatedly renewing.

This past month I have witnessed renewal in the bigger events of life that take us out of our routine, our centre, our equilibrium. Birth, death, marriage and illness. These important events that bring us to renew our thinking about life.

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## From This Chair

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A child is born and we see the great and amazing fruit of life. Innocent eyes and clarity that remind us of what we once were. How brilliantly we were designed and made. How easy life was. Maybe life is supposed to be that easy.

Death of loved ones brings regrets and confusion. Relearning where we come from with attention to the past, shared memories, and the renewal of friendships and family relations we haven't seen or connected with for a long time. In a life that moves swiftly are these moments of reconnection something we want to rekindle or are we happy to have moved on? What renews itself out of death?

Marriage celebrates the union of two lovers witnessed by friends and family with a reminder to renew our own love and vows, to our partners, to ourselves.

Illness. The sadness and unfairness of it. The threat of not having long, an expiration date looming. Daily routines get cancelled to focus on: What can we do to help? How can we reverse this? How can we make the most of life? How do I start living now? Renew my approach to living, a value on life? How can we accept this now?

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## From This Chair

*Continued . . .*

All elements of life see renewal. If we can renew our consciousness to be true to ourselves in a moment, a mundane moment, or a moment of crisis or excitement, then we are on to something. Don't you think?

I am grateful to have this technique to help me through my life.

Enjoy the articles and let yourself be renewed.

My best refreshed wishes to you,

Fiona

ATI Chair



## 2012 ATI AGM Papenburg, Germany

For information on travel, accommodation, and registration,

Please visit the AGM websites:

English: <http://www.ati-net.com/agm2012>

German: <http://www.ati-net.com/agm2012-DE/>



Please click this link below to find the page on our All Together website where you can discuss and arrange your travel plans with other members:

<http://ati-net.com/wordpress/groups/planning-for-germany-2012-agm/forum/topic/2012-agm-germany/>

This year's event will take us on a trip down memory lane, as founding members bring us through our history at our welcoming banquet on Sunday night. The Sponsors Panel gives us the opportunity to ask our Sponsors about how the process works. The business will take place during our Membership Council Meetings, where we will host a discussion on Affiliated Societies as well as our proposals. The workshops throughout the week are from a varied and talented group of teachers in all aspects of

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## 2012 ATI AGM Papenburg, Germany

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the work, reflecting the modern world we are working and *moving forward* in. A detailed schedule will be posted early July. And of course there will be the opportunity to share your own talents with us on *No Talent Night*.

There is an opportunity to become a Certified Teacher through Sponsorship on the Saturday before the AGM. Contact our Certification Coordinating Committee to organise the process for you.

All in all it promises to be a lively and interesting place to share some work, ideas, support and fun. We look forward to meeting you there.

Grüss

The Board, Site, Agenda and Workshop Committees

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen



**David Nesmith**

David is a certified Alexander Technique teacher who completed his training via apprentice style. A licensed Body Mapping teacher, horn teacher, and a professional hornist, David describes himself as an enthusiastic musician, hiker, and salsa dancer. David created several fabulous audio

guides to facilitate Constructive Rest. David's "means whereby" to create his audio guides is the focus of this article.

During 2000, I corresponded with David on the Andover Educator's Body Mapping list serve, since I was completing my training and Andover Educator certification with Barbara Conable. Also, David had recently become a certified Alexander Technique teacher. I stayed at David's home in order to attend one of the first Andover Educator Meetings and take some lessons with Barbara Conable, which David observed. So I got to know David as a person a little during that time, and later, I enjoyed emailing David, and talking to him and learning from him at two different Andover Educator Summer Conferences.

*Continued on next page*

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

Ten years later, I was trying to decide if I wanted to train to become an Alexander Technique teacher. As a full-time voice teacher and Body Mapping teacher, even a part-time AT training school seemed daunting. So I emailed David, and his advice and enthusiasm about his own Alexander Technique training experiences convinced me to go for it. It has also been a real pleasure getting to know David Nesmith further as I interviewed him for this article.

First, I asked David what inspired him to train to become an Alexander Technique teacher. Like many performing artists, David didn't begin his training in order to teach, he dove into his Alexander Technique training in order to become a better musician:

I sensed my limitation and tension, though I didn't know the depth of it – I wasn't breathing well, but I didn't actually know it. I just knew something wasn't right. My work in the music business was steady, but I didn't think I sounded good. I had the sense that things could be a lot better. I hadn't been injured, but at that point I was just tense and stressed. So I took a year to figure it out. I said a prayer: "show me what I need." I didn't know to seek out The Alexander Technique; rather it came to find me through discussions with many musicians, both professional and amateur. In March of 1995, I

*Continued on next page*

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

went to Chicago to have a horn lesson with Gail Williams who, at that time, was associate principal hornist of the Chicago Symphony. About every 10 minutes in the lesson, she would quietly say: "I think the Alexander Technique could really help you." Her encouragement was the final nudge that led me to begin lessons.

I returned to Columbus and began lessons with Lucy Venable, an ATI teacher. Right away I had a very positive feeling about it, ultimately having 3 months of lessons with Lucy. During that time, I took a workshop with Bill Conable, which led to a workshop with Barbara Conable. I experienced a good blend of The Alexander Technique and Body Mapping. Barbara Conable became my next private Alexander Technique teacher. Over the next year, it dawned on me: oh, these people teach, and maybe there's a training program for this.

I visited five different training schools. As a professional free-lance musician in Columbus, I was hesitant to move to a major city and perhaps have to wait tables and scrounge for money in order to live and train.

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

Here's a fun story. About this time, a friend of mine was trying to set me up with a woman in Santa Cruz, California. We talked on the phone and wrote letters. (This was before I had email!)

This situation had a resonance of possibility, so I flew to Santa Cruz. However, when we met I instantly realized it was as wrong as wrong could be. But I hung out for a couple of days visiting with this woman, sightseeing together.

I was aware that Frank Ottiwell's Alexander Technique teacher training was in San Francisco, so I made excuses and apologies to her and went to visit Frank's school. Once there, I knew I was in the right place, meaning I knew training was for me. I would have attended Frank's training if I'd been able to afford it, but I couldn't. This adventure to California, and my ultimate realization of the definite desire to train, was an interesting experience of indirect process: "God drawing straight with crooked lines."

I came back to Columbus, and Barbara Conable mentioned to several of us taking lessons with her, "well, there are five of

*Continued on next page*

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*



David with Barbara Conable

you who want to train, why don't you form your own school?" Our group of five consisted of a flutist, singer, violinist, a psychotherapist, and me. We brainstormed and Barbara helped us figure out what should be in a curriculum for training: anatomy, ethics, hands on, etc. We created a big mind map of this plan. Between the five of us we decided the other teachers we wanted to invite to be a part of our training. So in addition to working with Barbara, we invited Tommy Thompson and Anne Waxman.

We organized training weekends that eventually included a few students who were completely new to the technique and would attend and pay for workshop time, which helped offset our costs.

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

This went on for a year and a half and training events occurred about every four to six weeks. In between the scheduled workshops we would observe each other's lessons with Barbara and get together among ourselves for discussion and practice. Dale Beaver, another Columbus ATI teacher, also became involved as one of our local trainers.

At the same time we were training, Barbara Conable was creating her Body Mapping course "What Every Musician Needs to Know About the Body" so our training was heavily steeped in that. Then one of our class members had to move out of state, another had to drop out for personal reasons, and the remaining three of us couldn't afford to sustain those kinds of weekend training events on our own.

So we split off and did our own thing. (Each of us eventually qualified to teach.) I started flying to New York, D.C., and Boston to take private lessons with Anne Waxman, Don Zuckerman and Tommy Thompson.

I also spent time in Tommy's training course. With Tommy's recommendation and encouragement, I took advantage of two trips to Paris to work at a training school run by Christine Hardy. I also worked with Marie-Françoise Le Foll. Christine Hardy became one of my sponsors.

*Continued on next page*

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

Nearing the benchmark of three years in training, I began seeking sponsors but Tommy didn't think I was ready. Not granting me his sponsorship at that time was one of the best things that could have happened. It was a strong move. After a few more months of training I experienced a growth spurt in my ability. Tommy eventually became my third sponsor. Looking back, I can see there was a layer of end gaining that dropped away during the extra time focused on training. (A persistent need for approval.)

I hadn't started my training expecting to teach, but only to immerse myself in as much AT as I could. Eventually I realized there wasn't a day that went by when I wasn't talking about the Alexander Technique with somebody. Near the end of my training, I was interviewing to become the horn teacher at Denison University. I mentioned that I was near to finishing my AT training.

Their next question was: "How would you like to teach an Alexander Technique class?" I began teaching classes and private lessons in the Alexander Technique at Denison in

*Continued on next page*

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

January of 2000, the same month I received my ATI certificate. I am continually grateful for the synchronicity and blessing of how it all evolved.

In recent years, I have sought out continuing education/professional development opportunities. I've enjoyed working with John Nicholls, participating twice in his workshop series: *The Carrington Way of Working*. I've also attended Barbara Kent's NYC workshop, *Progress Not Perfection*. Elisabeth Walker continues to be a powerful influence. I worked with her at Sweetbriar and I have traveled to Oxford, England twice to work with her. Last August, I participated in a 5-day Cincinnati workshop with Yehuda Kuperman, a master teacher who lives in Jerusalem. He's returning to Cincinnati at the end of June for another 5-day workshop I will attend. I consider Yehuda to be a very powerful current influence. I am fortunate to have significant eclectic influences in my Alexander Technique training and continuing development.

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John Nicholls and David



Elisabeth Walker and David



Yehuda Kuperman and David

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

At Denison University, David teaches three classes of Alexander Technique Workshop, with a maximum of ten students in each class. So each week of each semester, he teaches three AT classes, which are open to all university students. Two classes are one hour and 20 minutes, meeting once a week. The third class is 50-minutes and meets twice a week. David's classes comprise a cross-section of music, dance, theatre, and several final semester seniors. David also teaches about 20 private students, 25-minute or 50-minute lessons. Outside of Denison University in his Columbus office, David teaches about 8 to 9 ongoing private AT students.



David's Denison University  
Alexander Technique Class

Constructive Rest:  
students loving their necks

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

I asked David what inspired him to create and launch his Constructive Rest audio guide series:

It was an expressed need from my students. I'd guide them verbally in Constructive Rest at the beginning of each class, but the students frequently reported that when they got back to their room they wouldn't remember what to do or what to think. The idea dawned on me: why don't I create a thoughtful audio guide? Barbara Conable had written a teaching article for Andover Educators called, "The Five Tasks of Constructive Rest." Her article had already been a strong influence on my approach to Constructive Rest. Using her five tasks as a starting point, I expanded to eight intentions for my audio guide. So the Constructive Rest project was a response to the students, wanting them to have something meaningful to listen to in their dorm room or at home.

I asked David to tell us about the creation of the different texts:

The scripts for the "Guide for Everyone" and the AT editions took about six months. I chose the first person perspective in the script so the person listening to it could take it as his/her own.

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

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Instead of me saying, “Free your neck,” I realized it was much more powerful for the students if I shifted it to “I free my neck” or “I notice my exhalation.” I also didn’t want to name the intentions directly but to direct the intention in the words. I envisioned recordings that were not a teaching tutorial, but rather a guide where the intentions were all blended in. That took a good deal of testing, refinement, and trial recordings. Overall, my Alexander Technique students were a big part of the refining process. Their feedback on the test recordings was invaluable.

I asked David how he chose to use Fran’s voice for his audio guides:

Coincident with the idea for this project, I was listening frequently to a spiritual podcast produced by the British Jesuits called *Pray As You Go*: <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/>

I liked one of the readers’ voices in particular. It began to occur to me that since England and Australia have large communities of Alexander teachers and students, it might make sense to produce a recording that included American and British English versions. After several months, I eventually succeeded in contacting the *Pray As You Go* reader I liked and found out that

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

her name is Fran. Up to that point, she'd had no experience with the Alexander Technique, but she agreed to work with me on the Constructive Rest project. I'd been planning a trip to England to visit Elisabeth Walker and arranged to have a recording session with Fran during that trip. After an overnight flight from Columbus, I immediately went to meet Fran in person for the first time. That morning we recorded the first three audio guide versions at the British Jesuits' Central London office, inside their makeshift podcast studio, a walk-in closet!



David and Fran

Later that week, I listened to the takes we did, realizing I could hear a London Tube train passing underground every now and then in the background. Not so good for Constructive Rest!

*Continued on next page*

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

On my final day in England, Fran and I managed to re-record certain sections allowing for edits later without the train rumble. It was a bit of an editing job but we got it. It was a huge learning experience in the recording process. After that experience I made the choice to use an actual recording studio for future sessions!

Finding a recording studio to work with me in Columbus is another interesting story of synchronicity. The first few studios I contacted weren't working out for a variety of reasons, but then I called Magnetic Studios, securing an appointment the very next day with John Fippin, the owner. I described the project indicating there was editing to do on Fran's versions, plus future recordings individually for Fran and I. I thought it curious that John didn't ask me to explain The Alexander Technique so I asked him if he knew about it. He said: "I recorded the audio version of Barbara Conable's book *How to Learn the Alexander Technique*." I knew I was in the right place!

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

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This past March we recorded the *Constructive Rest On Airplanes* edition. I recorded my version of the script in Columbus. This time with Fran we used a high-speed broadband studio linkup between Columbus and a studio in Soho London using integrated recording studio software. Very cool!

I asked David how he came up with the cover art for his recordings.

It was a very interesting process. Since my Alexander Technique classes were helping me refine scripts, I mentioned that I was open to design ideas for cover art. One of my artistically inclined students came up with some sketches, which were a nice starting point, but we didn't end up using her ideas. I tried three more artist collaborations yielding several not so catchy ideas. I lost a little money but learned a lot!

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

I was inspired to contact another former Denison student of mine, Kristine Aman, who'd been a studio art and creative writing major. After a couple of discussion/brainstorming sessions, we decided to try collaborating on the art. She came up with the basic design we ultimately used, while I contributed what I envisioned for colors and fonts. Kristine also designed my SmartPoise logo: *Fern Rising*, and some of the illustrations in my book *The Breathing Book for Horn*:

<http://www.breathingbookforhorn.com/>

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

We worked from January 2011 through the end of November 2011 on the first three audio guide editions: *The Guide for Everyone* and the two Alexander Technique editions. At a certain point, maybe by June, the idea for an additional five editions came to mind. It's an interesting observation that there are eight intentions and eight editions, but that wasn't planned consciously. The editions to come are three with various Body Mapping foci and one guiding better sleep.

My original plan was to produce only digital downloads, being completely "green." However, I was encouraged to have physical copies, too, because some folks aren't iPod savvy and might prefer a CD. I've also found it useful to have CD's on hand when teaching workshops. So instead of saying, "go check iTunes," I could make a sale on the spot. For the CD packaging, I chose the smallest carbon footprint option available, using recycled cardboard. By the way, the CD's don't have "liner notes." I consider the Constructive Rest website to be those and the website also provides additional resources.

*Continued on next page*

## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

The process of working together with Fran and John on the recordings and Kristine on the artwork has taught me, once again, that it's important to be open to giving projects the time they take. Forcing may cause tension, distress, and extra expense. No big surprise in the end!

I asked David how he decided to price his audio guides:

*The Guide for Everyone* and the two Alexander Technique editions cost \$29.99. My thinking has been that for less than half of the cost of an Alexander Technique lesson, students can reap continuous rewards with repeated listening. For the *Constructive Rest On Airplanes* edition, I decided to go with the more standard iTunes album price of \$9.99, but left off the instructional track about the eight intentions. The *On Airplanes* edition has been getting positive feedback.

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

I'd like to say a word or two about the eight intentions and the various editions. Here are the eight intentions, the teaching foundation of the guides:

1. Cultivate an Overall Integrated Body Awareness
2. Encourage Muscular Freedom Now (beginning with the neck muscles)
3. Facilitate Breathing Integrity
4. Promote an Accurate, Adequate Body Map
5. Renew a Healthy Relationship with Space
6. Think F. M. Alexander's Directions
7. Play with the Whispered Ah
8. Nurture Healthy Non-Doing, also known as Inhibition

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

On all but the *On Airplanes* edition, there is an extended audio track explaining each intention in detail.

***The Guide for Everyone*** focuses on intentions 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8. There's no special Alexander Technique or Body Mapping language, just thoughtful words designed to bring the listener into greater connection with themselves, their neck, breathing, and environment. It's very effective for slowing down in a busy day!

***The Alexander Technique Edition: Directions*** adds standard and creative versions of F. M.'s famous directions, "neck free, head forward and away, back to lengthen and widen." Here I offer the listener deepening experience interwoven with *The Guide for Everyone*.

Next comes ***The Alexander Technique Edition: Whispered Ah***. Imagine the two editions just described with periodic invitations to whisper ah.

The ***On Airplanes*** edition incorporates all the intentions except number 4, but tailored for sitting upright in a confined airplane seat. Based on my own flight tests and that of my testers, it IS possible to be more comfortable flying!

The intention ***Promote an Adequate, Accurate Body Map*** will be realized in later editions.

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

I asked David if there was anything about the Constructive Rest project that surprised him.

No matter how excited I was about how the recordings sounded or looked, or how powerful I thought they could be for people, in the end, any recipient of the recordings needed to be “ready” for it. I can’t force someone to benefit from an Alexander lesson. Just because someone has my Constructive Rest guides, they won’t be beneficial until they’ve made a practice of using the guides. I also realize the guides won’t necessarily be for everyone, anyway. This is not an answer to your question, because it’s really no surprise!

Here is my own review of David’s audio guides. I currently have David’s first three audio guides:

***The Guide for Everyone***

***The Alexander Technique Edition: Directions***

***The Alexander Technique Edition: The Whispered Ah***

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

As a classical singer and voice teacher, I am highly sensitive to the tone quality, pitch, and musical flow of people's voices. I also own and use many audio recordings that help me relax or get to sleep.

So the first thing that struck me as I listened to David's audio guides was his flowing, mellifluous voice. The amount of content was great – I did not feel overwhelmed. Also, the content was clear and easy to absorb, and David's delivery and deliberate, multiple pauses allowed the perfect amount of time to embody the information.

I really liked David's use of first person. For example: "My eyes are open for now, but I may close them later." Next, as a new Alexander Technique teacher, as I listened I kept thinking, "Oh wow, I will really benefit from these guides, and so will all of my AT students!"

Fran's voice is excellent, too, and it's easy to understand why David was so drawn to her speaking voice when he first heard it on the *Pray As You Go* podcasts. I like being able to have the choice to listen to either Fran or David. Also, I've found it highly beneficial to listen to each of them on different days. Due to their unique personalities, they each have varied inflections and pauses, and I have found that I absorb the information in a new way according to who I am listening to each time.

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## Conversation with David Nesmith

By MaryJean Allen

*Continued . . .*

Congratulations to my friend and colleague David Nesmith for creating these beneficial audio guides!

To purchase David's audio guides, click the link below:

<http://www.constructiverest.com>

And finally, David has created an excellent blog of constructive rest resources. To view the blog, click the link below:

<http://www.constructiverest.info>

## Building the Community

By Kathy Privatt

The Houston School for the Alexander Technique opened its Alexander Technique Teacher Training program in September 2010. Open to both teacher trainees and those who want to deepen their understanding of the Technique, this program adds to the training options associated with ATI. I caught up with founder Christine Lidvall this spring, and thought our readers would appreciate what she had to say:



**Christine Lidvall**

I was introduced to the Alexander Technique in the summer of 1987 when I went to a workshop in Claymont Court, West Virginia – a precursor to the Sweet Briar workshops. There I happened to have two lessons with Meade Andrews who really shifted things for me. I brought her into Houston for about nine workshops in the next three years. Then I got caught up in my dance life and it wasn't until I taught a dance workshop in 1996 at the North Carolina School for the Arts where I did some lessons with Glenna Batson that I was reminded about how much I loved the work. Glenna

*Continued on next page*

## Building the Community

By Kathy Privatt

suggested I call Bruce Fertman in Philadelphia, and he recommended coming to the Sweet Briar workshop that summer. That week with Bruce was the beginning of my true commitment to the Alexander Technique.

In the fall of 1997 I began my studies at the Alexander Alliance in Philadelphia with Bruce and Martha Hansen Fertman and other teachers including Elizabeth Walker, graduating in 2000 and becoming certified with Alexander Technique International. I continued to study with master teachers such as Frank Ottiwell and John Nicholls as well as Martha Hansen Fertman and Meade Andrews.

I asked Chris what compelled her to move from being a teacher to founding a school:

I had some students who were interested in training to be teachers and I liked the possibility of having more of an Alexander community here in Houston. This is such a huge city, I thought it could support more teachers and by having a

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## Building the Community

By Kathy Privatt

*Continued . . .*

larger community of Alexander teachers here the work would become better known. It is nice to think that there are other people out there that love the work as much as I do, and that we are not far from each other in terms of being face-to-face and working with each other.

Information about The Houston School for the Alexander Technique, including expectations, objectives, schedules, and bios of the faculty, can be found at [www.ahealingcollective.com](http://www.ahealingcollective.com). In particular, I thought ExChange readers would be interested in Lidvall's introduction to the Technique. On the website, she describes the Technique as: "Movement the Way Nature Intended"

The Alexander Technique is a unique and practical way of resolving pain or difficulties with movement, from everyday activities like gardening to specialized ones like playing a musical instrument. It is a form of neuromuscular re-education that evolved from the work of FM Alexander (1869-1955). We

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## Building the Community

By Kathy Privatt

*Continued . . .*

all have movement habits that we develop over time. These habits can cause stress while we go about our day and we don't often notice that we are in trouble until we experience pain. With the Alexander Technique we can become more aware of ourselves both in movement and in stillness. Our usual ideas of posture change from thinking we have to hold ourselves to a more fluid and relaxed state of uprightness. We are able over a period of time to change our habits and return to the more natural ease of movement we had as children. We may discover along the way that how we think has a great effect on us.

Her consistent use of "we" is also reflected in her response to my inquiry about teaching teachers:

I enjoy so much seeing the opening up of the trainees and to see their use and understanding of the technique grow. I learn so much from them while being able to share information on a deep level.

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## Building the Community

By Kathy Privatt

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Since the school is winding down its second year, I asked Lidvall to reflect from a metaphorical 30,000-foot-view and what she valued about the choices she has made about the school?



I have learned so much since I started the Houston School for the Alexander Technique. Martha Fertman has been instrumental in helping me understand the art of teaching teachers. If she hadn't agreed to mentor me in this process, I might not have decided to start the school. I feel so blessed that she is a major part of this training program. We both believe that mentoring a training program is a very powerful way to ensure the level of training in ATI. I value Martha and all the teachers that I

bring in to work with the teacher trainees. I also value my trainees so much as I am reminded what a challenging path it is to pursue

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## Building the Community

By Kathy Privatt

*Continued . . .*

this work to this degree. I value the space we all create together during our training sessions, the energy of the work, the care we have for each other. It is exciting to see the development of the trainees and to think that one day they will be out in the world bringing the Alexander Technique to their students.

If you could influence/control the future, where would AT fit?

The future is a big question. It would be easy to say that everyone should study it from childhood. That might make a big difference in the world. Still there are people out there who don't want to change and we have to let them have that choice. If AT was taught in the school system, I think it would have to be an indirect teaching that went with other types of learning. I also think it takes having enlightened parents to support this type of learning. Of course if I could control the future, doctors around the world would all know about the technique and would recommend it to everyone. Somatic

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## Building the Community

By Kathy Privatt

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movement studies would be mainstream and everyone who was interested in learning more about themselves would have the opportunity to do so. Classes would be available for a reasonable price to everyone. Over time, the impact would be apparent, as various arenas of constant discord in today's world would change. People would have more respect for each other.

Finally, I couldn't pass up a chance to ask the question that has a bit of this writer's personal agenda attached to it: Any advice for new teachers?

Be the best you can be at the present moment. Keep teaching whenever and wherever you can. Teaching gradually unfolds just like the technique. And a wise man once told me to listen to what you are saying to your students and follow your advice.

With our thanks to Christine Lidvall for taking time to share her thoughts, let's all listen and follow our own advice.

## How to Sit

By Matthew Pressman

A recent study with 3,000 respondents, published in the UK's Telegraph, found that people sit an average of 14 hours and 39 minutes a day. Sitting, when executed incorrectly, can create severe compression in the spine. The cumulative effect, over the course of time, can lead to injury, spasm and pain. Yet, there remains confusion about how to sit correctly.

When people are told to "sit up straight" they grip their muscles, push their chest out, tense their abs, and yank their shoulders back. This puts strain on the torso. Does this feel good? No, it's exhausting and uncomfortable. So, people revert back to their normal sitting posture.

What is normal sitting posture? Often, people collapse the spine into a "C" curve. They rotate back onto their tailbone and counter-balance that by pushing their head forward. The adult head typically weighs about 10 pounds. By pushing the head forward, using basic physics, the effective weight of the head nearly doubles. This puts great top-down pressure on the spine. Bearing weight into the tailbone puts excess pressure, bottom-up, on the lumbar spine. From both ends, they've squashed the space between the intervertebral discs. Instead, we want to release tension and decompress when sitting.

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How? Here are three tips:

1. Sit down into a chair with a hard surface and slide your hands, palms up, directly between the seat of your chair and your bottom. Your palms will feel two, sharp bony structures. These two bones are your ischial tuberosity, better known as your sitz bones. These are the "feet of your torso" - note: the sitz bones are where you sit, not back onto your tailbone.
2. Then, back your bottom all the way towards the back of the chair, balance lightly on your sitz bones, and lean back, easing the back of your torso into the back of your chair. Let the back of the chair absorb the weight of your torso.
3. Don't add muscle tension to hold yourself up. The chair is supporting you. With feet resting evenly on the floor, make sure you're not pushing your head forward, let your neck muscles release so your head can ease (or if you prefer a metaphor, "float") up and away from the cervical spine, not loading any excess pressure from the top.

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This manner of sitting should decompress the spine and allow the pelvis to rock delicately on the sitz bones. Less compression, less pressure on the intervertebral discs, and less muscular tension throughout the torso should relieve a stiff or sore back. And, even better, it can help prevent future back pain.



Matt Pressman, M.AmSAT, RSME, has been working with the Alexander Technique for over ten years. He started his training at New York's Mathews School for the Alexander Technique and went on to complete professional AmSAT certification at Manhattan Center for the Alexander Technique. He is a certified teaching member of the American Society for the Alexander Technique, American Center for the Alexander Technique, Alexander Technique International, and ISMETA. Matt is also an active member of the International Association of Healthcare Practitioners trained in the craniosacral system and its application to chronic pain conditions. Matt Pressman's website address is: <http://www.decompressbackpain.com/>

## An Invitation To Expand Your Connections

Would you enjoy being more connected to the ATI Community? Are you willing to provide some service to ATI with those new connections? An Editor or Co-Editors are needed for the *ATI ExChange* by March 1, 2013.

This is an interesting and creative job that allows you to reach out to members for publishable material and to shape our *ExChange* conversations.

The *ExChange* is published three times a year: October, February and June. Editor or Co-Editors' duties include four tasks:

**Procure** articles, interviews, photos, poems, and so forth from Alexander Technique teachers and trainees, or from those who subscribe to the *ExChange* and are highly interested in Alexander Technique

**Design** each issue (this is not difficult as the new editors will inherit six different Microsoft Word *ExChange* templates that recent co-editor MaryJean Allen designed, plus there are many free and easy-to-use newsletter templates in the Microsoft Word software program)

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## An Invitation To Expand Your Connections

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**Convert** the document to a PDF format (this is done quickly and easily with one or two computer keystrokes in the Microsoft Word software program)

**Compress** the PDF format using the software Adobe Acrobat Pro (this is done quickly and easily with one or two computer keystrokes). Please note that access to the software program Adobe Acrobat Pro is a must. (Adobe Acrobat Pro is currently used in many colleges, universities, and some larger high schools)

If you are interested in this position, or if you know someone we should contact for this position, please contact either Co-Chair of the ATI Communications Committee:

rj fleck                      [rj@rjfleck.ca](mailto:rj@rjfleck.ca)

Monika Gross              [formfitnessfunction@gmail.com](mailto:formfitnessfunction@gmail.com)



## Future Workshops and Events

Please click on the following links to view

Workshops and Events:

ATI Notice Board of Workshops and Ongoing Events

[www.ati-net.com/atiwshop.php](http://www.ati-net.com/atiwshop.php)

AmSAT Workshops and Events

[www.amsatonline.org/classes-events](http://www.amsatonline.org/classes-events)

STAT Workshops and Events

<http://www.stat.org.uk/pages/courses.htm>

## We Need Your Submissions For the Fall ExChange!

Submissions for the fall issue due  
by October 1, 2012

Please share the wealth of your Alexander Technique experiences from your life, your teaching, or your learning by writing an article, essay, book review, poem, etc., and submitting to the *ExChange*.

Please email your article to:

[kathy.privatt@lawrence.edu](mailto:kathy.privatt@lawrence.edu)

1. Email your article in a MS word or plain text format. (Not PDF)
2. Important: please do not use text boxes in the article.
3. If you use pictures or graphics in your article, please attach each picture or graphic to your email.
4. Please put your article in the body of your email, in case the attachment becomes corrupted via email.
5. Include a brief biography, and attach a clear photo of yourself.  
Thank you!

## Please Submit the Following:

### Articles and Interviews

We accept articles and interviews on a variety of topics.

### Essays

Put your experiences, teaching, or research into essay form to share with your Alexander Technique colleagues.

### Book, DVD, Video, or CD Reviews

Please describe what these sources offer.

### Poetry, Art, or Photography

All art forms are welcome, especially if relevant to Alexander Technique.

### Workshop Experiences

Write a brief description of an insight or exercise from a workshop or training session you attended.

### Humor

Please share any humorous moments pertaining to Alexander Technique.

***Submissions for the fall issue  
due by October 1, 2012***



## ATI Vision and Mission

Alexander Technique International is a worldwide organization of teachers, students and friends of the Alexander Technique created to promote and advance the work begun by F. Matthias Alexander. ATI embraces the diversity of the international Alexander Technique community and is working to promote international dialogue. Our mission is:

To create and sustain open means of global communication for people to discuss, apply, research and experiment with the discoveries of F.M. Alexander.

To encourage the use of the F.M. Alexander Technique in both human and environmental relationships.

To embody the principles of the F.M. Alexander Technique in ATI's structure and means of operation.

To provide a means for recognizing Alexander Technique Teacher competence and providing certification for those teachers who qualify.

## ATI Website

<http://www.ati-net.com/index.php>

## ATI membership, dues, and Exchange subscription

### Membership Dues in US dollars

Yearly Fees from Jan - December

General member:	\$102.50 per year
Teaching member:	\$184.50 per year
Teacher Trainee:	\$00.00 first year
Teacher Trainee Renewal:	\$56.50 per year

Note: All ATI memberships include an *ExChange* subscription.

To subscribe to the *ExChange* alone, please send check or money order in US funds payable to ATI in the amount of \$35.00 to:

ATI Administrative Secretary  
1692 Massachusetts Ave  
3rd floor  
Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

+1 888-668-8996 (toll free from USA & Canada)

+1 617-497-5151

Fax +1 617-497-2615

Email: [alexandertechnique@verizon.net](mailto:alexandertechnique@verizon.net)



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