

# ExChange

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## Embracing Change



## From This Chair

Jennifer Mizenko



I come to write this entry after having spent the evening sleeping on my bathroom floor. Did you know the most interior bathroom is the safest place in the house in the case of a tornado? And an interior bathroom in a basement is the most ideal place to be when a tornado is coming! How do I know this? Because I've spent many days and evenings in the past two months in bathrooms and basements waiting for tornadoes to pass through.

And I have been fortunate, because in each instance the tornadoes have passed on by without touching down where I was.

A tornado is caused by the meeting of hot and cold air streams. When the two different air flows meet each other it causes a violent storm, creating the swirling mass of energy. Once the energy has collided and swirled, there is a beautiful calm after the storm.

As we have seen recently in the United States, tornadoes are violent and deadly. But time and time again, people can survive tornadoes by retreating to an interior room.

Air is flowing around and change is afoot for ATI. In October the membership will be electing a new Chair, Secretary, and three Board Members. This election will result in a very new Board. And change is afoot for the *ExChange* as well.

To uphold ATI's Vision/Mission, and as responsible stewards of ATI's financial resources, the ATI Board and the new *ExChange* editors MaryJean Allen and Kathy Privatt have decided the best way to move forward is to publish the *Exchange* in an electronic format.

We realize that not all of our members will be happy with this change. And there may even be some hot and cold opinions that meet and swirl around, creating a slight disturbance. But if you hold one of these extreme hot or cold opinions, I ask that you go to your personal interior room. Maybe your personal interior room is the same place you go to when allowing your Primary Control to change your habits. Allow the wind to blow and the air to shift. And while there, consider the future of ATI and how we need to grow and change for the benefit of the organization as a whole.

Change is in the air for ATI. The wind is swirling around. But as practitioners, students and teachers of the Alexander Technique, we know change is good. And change leads to new opportunities, a fresh perspective, and a beautiful calm after the storm.





## 2011 International Congress:

Learning From Each Other      August 7-13, 2011

We are quite excited about the Congress line up. We have a selection of 92 afternoon Alexander Workshops for you to choose from. These are in addition to working with 20 World Renown Teachers in the morning, plus 13 Lectures from experts in the fields of human cognition, Alexander Technique and human functioning, and the Alexander Technique and musicians. We will also have a large work exchange hall open all day and evening for you to meet your colleagues from around the world. Every night there will be cultural events showcasing the talents of our wonderful community including a Tango Milonga. The Congress class sizes will not be too large or too small. Just right for meeting friends and enjoying the Technique.

We are very pleased to realize that the Congress now is a center of the Alexander World where expertise and excellence can be easily studied and experienced.

We have been able to keep the tuition price low. And while you are in the neighborhood you might enjoy a lovely look around Northern Italy, the local beauty of Ticino, or the magnificent Swiss Alps.

You can find all the information you need at [www.atcongress.com](http://www.atcongress.com). Take a look. I think you will be pleased.

Also, we are happy to announce to all Tangueras and Tangueros that we will have a Milonga taking place in the Hotel Pestalozzi's beautiful ballroom on Wednesday evening, August 10, from 8 p.m. until midnight. You will find the Hotel Pestalozzi just opposite the Congress center. Please come and enjoy tangoing in Lugano!

Arrivederci a Lugano!

Yours,  
Bob Britton, Jamie McDowell and Irmel Weber

Sixth Annual Florida Alexander  
Technique Workshop: 2011  
Open to Teachers, Trainees and  
Advanced Students  
of the Alexander Technique

Teachers:



Martha Hansen Fertman



Meade Andrews

The sixth annual Boca Raton Alexander Technique workshop held February 12-16, 2011 was a great success with 25 advanced students, teacher trainees, and Alexander Technique teachers in attendance. Meade Andrews and Martha Hansen Fertman conducted wonderful learning around simply "be patient, stick to principle." Not only was the weather perfect for this lovely event, held in the beautiful indoor and outdoor space of a local church, but time was built into the schedule to accommodate beach time less than a mile away! We hope you will join us next year for this special event.

For more info: [meadandrews@aol.com](mailto:meadandrews@aol.com)

On the final day of the Workshop, participants gathered into groups and wrote the following Haikus in appreciation of their Florida experiences:

"CCC"

Trusting the belly  
Riding, not fighting the waves  
Your intuition

~~~~~

"All Home"

Freeing into ease  
Allowing oh spiraling  
Bringing it all home

~~~~~

The air and the sea  
With the mountains behind us  
Supported by earth

~~~~~

Soft simplicity  
Resilient door opening  
Flowing symphony

~~~~~

Moist insight inspires  
Warmth within and upon us  
Doors open softly

~~~~~

I gladly trust change  
Experiencing fullness  
All the time I need

~~~~~

Outside circles monkey sit  
Lift light release free  
Head leads and body follows



## Constructive Conscious Caregiving

by Robin Gilmore

She labors with each breath, mouth agape, chest heaving. Her head is fixed in an extreme backward tilt. The rasping exhalations turn to moans as the pace of respiration accelerates. She is dying. She is my mother. As we breathe together for the next few hours I have the mental clarity to notice myself in this shared act of letting go.

We arrived at this moment after eight years of health crises and the cumulative wasting effects of Alzheimer's disease. My mother was a physician and had been a talented athlete. She had a nose for adventure and was fearless in her many pursuits. As her only child I inherited many of her traits and those served me well in the role of caregiver, case manager and patient advocate. I was not intimidated by any medical professional and became a quick study in financial planning and eldercare. These intellectual tests were interspersed with the heavy physical labor of sorting through and paring down fifty years' worth of cluttered belongings in order to sell my mother's house.

Throughout each challenge I drew deeply from the well of Alexander principles. Thirty years of studying the Alexander Technique helped me adapt to my shifting responsibilities as my mother's mental and physical capabilities disintegrated. F. M.'s phrase "analyze the conditions present" became a mantra when prioritizing the many demands upon my time.

If something *could* wait, it did. I learned to conserve my energy for the numerous emergencies along the way. In an emergency, then what?

Ask my fight or flight muscles to release, find my back, feel my feet on the ground. Take a breath and take action with as much clarity as can be mustered. Once the crisis has been stabilized, allow time for the adrenalin rush to subside. Exhale fully and wait for the air to come in through my nose. Find a place to lie down with maximum support. Drink lots of water.

There were days when my interactions with my mother left me exhausted and drained. Despite telling myself, "Do NOT argue with dementia," I would on occasion fall down that rabbit hole in a pointless effort to be right. I wanted my mother to agree with what was obviously fact when she was unable to grasp reality. Arguing with Alzheimer's was end-gaining on a grand scale. Because my mother was losing her capacity to reason through a sequence of thoughts or activities, I needed to adapt my own means-whereby in relation to her condition. Her health and safety trumped my ego and timetables.

When I successfully slowed down and let go of a predictable outcome, I was able to observe and listen to my mother with compassion. Whether or not she was making sense didn't matter and was certainly beyond my control.

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## Constructive Conscious Caregiving

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What I could control, at least most of the time, was my demeanor. Not surprisingly, the quality of my own use sometimes seemed to have an effect on my mother. Even when that was not the case, I felt better and had more energy. Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's is a marathon rather than a sprint. There are certainly crises along the way that require swift and decisive action, but mostly there are mounting responsibilities coupled with letting go of certain activities and types of interaction.

I will give myself credit for doing the best I could on any given day. If I caught myself forgetting Strategy #1: Do NOT argue with dementia, I would pause and redirect the conversation along with my own use. There were some colossal failures along the way, and I had to learn not to beat myself up afterward.

As a female physician of her generation, my mother had to aim for perfection at all costs. If she didn't meet expectations, there would be no second chance given. Any mistake could have severe consequences. Growing up with that model, I developed into quite the perfectionist. How fitting that I would gravitate to the Alexander Technique in which there is no right or wrong but only better or worse. Rather than the absolutes of Western medicine,

Alexander's principles operate along a flexible continuum. We do not treat symptoms but look at causation and psychophysical patterns. There is no end point at which we say "case closed." There is always more to learn about ourselves and how we respond to stimuli.

The Alzheimer's Years provided a steady stream of "unfamiliar sensory experiences" as there was no telling what my mother might retain from day to day or moment to moment. At the beginning, we had some epic tests of will over major issues including her ability to drive a car, manage her medications and handle her finances. I sometimes resorted to creative trickery in the interest of safety. On the day she moved grudgingly into Baywoods, an assisted living facility, my mother told anyone within earshot that she was there temporarily until her physical therapy ended. She insisted that her recent hospitalization had been due to misdiagnosis and that the reason she kept losing her balance was due to lying around not getting any exercise. Fine. Do NOT argue with dementia! The medical team, social workers and I knew she was never going to return to her home. Alzheimer's moves in one direction only.

In the middle stages of her decline, my mother gradually accepted her living situation and became the "poster child" for participating in every activity Baywoods offered. She remained stubborn about physical mobility, refusing to use a walker or cane despite falling many times.

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## Constructive Conscious Caregiving

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No matter how often she fell, my mother miraculously never broke any bones, but her stubborn disposition became magnified by dementia. I never knew when the phone would ring with a report from the nursing staff that she had fallen and needed to go out for x-rays or a CT scan. We then performed our pas de deux in which she resisted my help transitioning from the assisted living facility to the car while I pretended to let her move under her own steam. I stayed in close proximity, kinesthetically attuned to her shuffling and unsteady gait. On the occasions when she was in a wheelchair, she would try to stand up before the brakes were set. I had to be ready to receive my mother's weight when, not if, she lost her balance. My Alexander training and years of Contact Improvisation served me well whenever we left the relative safety of Baywoods.

During this period my cell phone was turned on at all times. My Alexander students understood that I might have to interrupt or cancel a session on a moment's notice. I revealed more about my personal life than usual out of necessity. With professional boundaries somewhat softened I had to monitor my own use as well as divert students from becoming overly concerned about me.

The focus remained on them and their reasons for studying the Alexander Technique. One of the trade secrets among Alexander teachers is that we feel better after working than when we began. If not, then we had better

address our own use before thinking about anything else. Amidst the ordeal of my mother's decline, teaching became a mini-vacation. No matter how well or how poorly I may have been handling the stress at a particular juncture, being able to teach the Alexander Technique and work on myself allowed me to recover and restore equilibrium time and time again.

Notice the balance of my head on top of my spine. Connect from sitting bones to heels. Breathe into my back. Scan the horizon. Go for a brisk walk or take a nap. Drink lots of water. Cry often and ardently.

How much can a body take? In my mother's case, more than even her daughter could imagine. Along with the visible signs of weakness and deteriorating reflexes, her nervous system went haywire. Unlike the localized neural damage of stroke or head trauma, Alzheimer's attacks the brain globally. Beyond the signature trait of memory loss, the disease can affect speech, taste, smell, balance, sense of time, comprehension of sights and sounds, recognition of loved ones and regulation of bodily functions. TIA (transient ischemic attack - like a mini-stroke) occurs frequently causing all the systems to break down. My mother was tough as nails, but these lightning strikes in her brain eventually got the best of her.

## Constructive Conscious Caregiving

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When a loved one has Alzheimer's the grieving process begins while the person is still alive. I mourned the loss of a brilliant mind while continuing to interact with my mother in whatever ways were available moment to moment. One day she asked where her husband was. Here was a bellwether moment. My father had been dead for twenty-five years and my mother had never remarried. Her question to me had no relevance to time or sequence of events. I caught myself mid-gasp and closed my lips and waited for the air to come in through my nose. I softened my neck muscles, looked at my mom and formulated an answer. That was the extent of constructive conscious control at that juncture. The collapse around my heart was not subject to change.

I awoke that morning *knowing*. This would be the day her struggle ended. I lingered in bed planning to phone Baywoods when the day shift nurses came on duty. Before I could make the call, the phone rang. It was the head nurse essentially speaking my thoughts aloud: Let her be. Don't transfer her from the bed to her lounge chair. Do not force her to eat or drink. Give her morphine hourly.

We were on the same page regarding end stage care. In the previous few days my mother's condition had deteriorated swiftly. She could no longer walk or support her own weight. She had difficulty swallowing even a milkshake.

Trying to coax her to eat had begun to feel like torture to me as well as the skilled staff. One of the last full sentences I heard her say had to do with going home. My mother, known as one tough customer, had no fight left in her. It was time for her to rest.

In a state of hyper-awareness I prepared for the final visit. I decided to take a feline companion. Scout had been my mother's cat and now lived with me. The nurses were happy to see the cat carrier as they knew how much my mother loved animals. They walked with me to mom's room explaining each aspect of the care they were providing to the woman they affectionately called "Doc." By that point their routine consisted of monitoring vital signs, repositioning Doc hourly to prevent bedsores and administering pain medication. When we got to my mother's room I could hear her arduous breathing from around the corner.

The nurses performed their duties and left, closing the door so that Scout could roam freely. Mom's eyes were closed and she was no longer able to speak, but she knew I was there. I spent the next hours talking to her, stroking her with the lightest touch and intuiting my part in our final breaths together. My mother had never been a "touchy-feely" person, and despite her intellectual curiosity, the Alexander Technique was simply *that thing* that her daughter claimed to do for a living, something to do with movement and too abstract for a physician of her generation.

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## Constructive Conscious Caregiving

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Well, what was happening in that room could not have been more tangible.

I spoke to her of family members and the many adventures we'd had together. I told her she had worked hard for so long and deserved to rest. Scout participated as well. Once she had investigated the room thoroughly, Scout jumped up on the bed and gradually settled down near mom's feet. By this point mom was moaning with each shallow breath. Amazingly, Scout stayed put and purred. I began to hum. Then I switched to whispered "ahs" and placed my hand at the back of my mother's head. These would be our last breaths together. I knew she would not let go with me in the room, so I chose when to leave.

My apartment was close by, and I returned home to await the inevitable phone call. That call came just a few hours later from the night nurse. I had a feeling that "Doc" had held out until the day shift had left because they had become like family. She was not going to die on their watch just as surely as she was not going to die in front of her daughter.

Within minutes I arrived back at Baywoods. Unlike the usual bustle of daytime activities, it was eerily quiet. I had never been there after all the residents were in bed. The nurse was waiting for me, and she walked me to mom's room. Total silence. The whirring motor of the air mattress had

been turned off. No water was running in the pipes. And there was no sound of agonized breathing. My mother was at peace.

### POSTSCRIPT

I began writing this piece on the one-year anniversary of my mother's death. The words had been formulating in my head for a while, and at some point I realized a book was in order. This article is the first drop in the bucket and is written for an audience familiar with the Alexander Technique. I didn't want to get bogged down in explaining concepts such as end-gaining but wanted the writing to be a bit raw. I can honestly say that AT principles became survival skills that helped me navigate the Alzheimer's maze. It is my hope going forward to bring some of those principles to a broad population of caregivers and health care professionals. I envision a book about the somatic aspect of caring for a loved one with dementia.

There are a number of excellent resources on practical matters including healthcare services, advanced directives, power of attorney, etc. I found this information to be most helpful. These books do encourage caregivers to take care of themselves and offer advice such as getting enough rest, asking for help, eating well and joining a support group. They describe wide-ranging emotions that may arise in response to dealing with dementia and assure the reader that these responses are common.

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## Constructive Conscious Caregiving

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What is missing from the literature is a psychophysical component, a set of strategies for embodied, kinesthetically aware caregiving. That is what we in the Alexander Technique and other somatic disciplines can offer.

The following self-care activity can be done in bed during bouts of sleeplessness. Chronic insomnia is common for family caregivers, particularly women in menopause. Rather than turn on the lights and get out of bed in the middle of the night, I find it helpful to keep the room dark and remain relatively still with my eyes closed. That way my tissues can be at rest even if my brain does not want to turn off.

Here is the INSOMNIA MANDALA:

Lying on your back, place your left hand at the bottom of your ribs below your sternum. Place your right hand at your pubic bone. If your abdominal cavity were a clock, your hands would be at 12 and 6. Let your hands be soft and weighty. Remain here for several minutes sending warmth to your organs.

Slowly slide your hands in a clockwise direction to 2 and 8 o'clock. Allow your hands to spread over your organs and rest here for a while.

Slide your hands to 4 and 10 o'clock. Your right hand can send energy to your liver, a vital filter for toxins. The clockwise path of your hands follows the direction of your ascending and descending colon and will encourage good digestion.

If after several minutes you are still awake, ask your eyes to soften deeply into their sockets and take your hands on another slow journey around your abdomen. Rest well.



Robin Gilmore, MFA, is a Teaching Member and Sponsoring Member of ATI. She directs CBAS, an Alexander Technique teacher training program in Greensboro, NC and is a faculty member at the Annual Residential AT Course at Ohio State University. Robin is the author of *What Every Dancer Needs to Know About the Body*. Her choreography has been presented internationally.

To view Robin Gilmore's website, please click the following link:

<http://www.chesapeakealexander.com>

## Performing With Ease, Part 2

### Relating the Alexander Technique to Activities of a Percussionist

By Rob Falvo

As percussionists, we typically perform on all our instruments with excess tension. We go through our life practicing and performing without any real change. Instead, we adopt methods of relaxation or stretching in hopes of keeping our career alive until we are ready to stop. We might justify our aches and pains by saying, "My shoulder hurts regularly because three years ago I dislocated it and..." or "I practiced six hours today and my arms are aching. Well, no pain, no gain," and then carry on, knowing in the back of our minds that we are not being truthful with ourselves. When we misuse our bodies, especially as we grow older, there is a tendency to feel pain or discomfort.

#### MISUSE AND OVERUSE

There is no such thing as overuse; it is all misuse. When we are not aware of how we are moving, we will practice our instruments in the same habitual, conditioned way. We practice for the end result without being aware of the process. F.M. Alexander called this "end-gaining." We would not misuse our bodies if we weren't end-gaining.

For most of us, moving percussion equipment is a big part of our job, and it is a good example of how we end-gain. We just want the equipment moved to where it needs to go without paying much attention to how we are moving it. Next time, instead of lifting

instruments unconsciously, begin to notice how you are using your body. When you reach down to grab marimba bars, are your knees locked and hips fixed while you bend from your lower back, or are you flexing at the hips, knees, and ankles, allowing your hips to move back? When you are carrying tom-toms in your hands and against your chest, are you tightening your neck, lifting up, and pulling in your shoulders, or are you letting your arms release down and away from your torso, allowing the drums to be supported equally between your arms and body?

#### ACCENT THE PROCESS RATHER THAN THE END RESULT

We end-gain less when we pay more attention to the process and let the end result take care of itself. There are ways of practicing to become aware of what is happening in your body.

1. Become aware of your breath and the quality of your breathing. Is your breathing shallow, stuck, interrupted, or are you breathing fully, with ease, and with an easy flow? Whenever you become aware of your breath, thoughts are let go, your mind becomes clear, and end-gaining disappears. As a result, your neck becomes less tense, your shoulders drop down, and in general your body lets go of excess tension. The next time you practice music, be aware of your breath and notice changes in your body tension.

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Performing With Ease *Continued . . .*ACCENT THE PROCESS  
RATHER THAN THE END RESULT

2. Become aware of how you are moving your ankles, knees, hips, and top joint of your spine. The top joint, called the A/O joint, is found between your ears and behind your nose. The hips are found lower on your body than where most people think, and understand that there is no major joint at your waist. (See my first article on Alexander Technique in the August 2008 Percussive *Notes* or ExChange volume 17, number 2 for in-depth discussion of the joints.)

3. Begin to notice how conditioned the mind is and understand that your conditioned thoughts always influence your movement. If your mind is agitated, you are going to move with excess tension, and that will affect everything you do.

Since we were old enough to falsely believe that we are separate from people and things around us and began to use words like "I, me, and mine," our minds began to be conditioned by fear and we began to hold tension in our bodies. At this time, we began to imitate people and take on their habitual patterns of movement. This is why many family members walk, talk and, in general, move around in a similar fashion. It is very interesting to watch yourself and your own family members move, noticing similar habits of tension.

CHANGE YOUR DEFINITION  
OF SUCCESS

We are programmed through our musical training to go for the end product. We have learned this very well from almost everyone. As percussionists, we have learned that to be successful we need to achieve our highest technical ability. We practice to have the fastest hands. We play our routines on xylophone, snare drum, drumset, etc. to achieve this as best we can. Many times we aim to match the speed of our favorite recordings. There is nothing wrong with practicing this way except that we are typically practicing for the end result rather than paying attention to the process. When I changed my mind about what success really means to me (performing effortlessly), I changed the way I approached practicing on all percussion instruments. This has improved my overall performance of any piece on any instrument. It is not about speed any more, it is about the process.

Paradoxically, speed can and has improved as a result. I understand that to shift your thinking to process rather than outcome can feel like you are taking a big chance. It is not something that was part of your musical training. Students wonder how they will get anything done if they are not aiming for the end. Well, when you are ready to take a chance and approach practicing in this way, you might find that the constant chatter in your head to get things right and get it now takes a backseat and you become less tense.

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## Performing With Ease *Continued . . .*

As a result, there is clarity in what you are doing, there is easiness, lightness in your body, and there is direction in what needs to be done. You begin to understand that you do not need to force anything.

As an instructor, this might change how you teach because teaching now becomes process oriented. Of course, your students still need to put in hours of practicing, but the way they practice changes. By teaching in a process-oriented way, students are nurtured to notice their tendencies or habits, and practicing becomes a journey into self-awareness. This is not to say that there is no accountability for what happens in their juries or recitals. All that is there, with one major difference. There is no personal judgment of the student, no criticism, no blame—only observation and understanding. Nothing is personal, and everything that happens on stage matters. The teacher becomes a mirror for the student to reflect back to the student how he or she has performed with empathy, honesty, directness, and openness.

### GIVING UP JUDGMENTS

When we stop judging ourselves (in other words, stop trying to be right), and instead notice what is actually happening in our body, excess tension drops away. It is only through observation and acceptance that we begin to change. You do not need to do anything but become aware of when you are using excess tension for change to occur.

How do you do that? Be honest and notice that you would rather fix the situation than just observe it. When excess tension is seen in the body as interfering with your ease of motion, it will let go and you will be free of it.

Whenever there is a judgment of right or wrong, good or bad, etc., there is fear, and this translates physically as a contraction. Our tendency is to pull in and shorten the body. Notice what is happening in your body the next time you practice a piece of music. Is your neck pushed forward? Are your shoulders pulled into your body and raised up closer to your neck? Is your torso collapsed, shortening the distance from your shoulders to your hips? Typically, we carry ourselves the same way when we are performing on stage.

### RELAXATION

When we relax we are actually making an effort, or *trying*, to be easy. Typically this means a collapse in the part of the body we are trying to relax. When this is done, either tension creeps in somewhere else in the body to compensate for the relaxation or we will not have enough muscle tone to play. Instead, we can *release* excess tension—allowing it to be felt throughout our whole body. This way, breathing is easier and our body is more flexible throughout.

Alexander Technique work is not about relaxing in isolation; it has direction and is about using the least amount of tension necessary to do whatever you are doing.

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## Performing With Ease *Continued . . .*

This is done by observing how you are moving. Explore and see how much tension is actually necessary to perform any piece you are working on. This doesn't mean that *fff* passages are not *fff*; just notice how much energy it really takes to play one.

### THE USE OF IMAGERY

Imagery can be used effectively in many situations, particularly visualization exercises to memorize music. However, in the Alexander Technique work, thinking of images to release muscle tension distracts students from being able to look directly at the quality of their movement. For example, an image to let go of body tension, such as "imagine yourself in your favorite vacation place," is something that is thought of in the mind and is a distraction to true observation. When you identify with thought, it takes you away from the present moment. How can you observe if your mind is wandering? The observer is free from any thoughts and is witnessed from behind the mind. A direct approach is to get to know your habits by seeing them as they occur.

### RESISTANCE

A key to moving with ease is in recognizing when you are resisting life. When there is resistance, there is a contraction in the body. When we notice even the smallest amount of contraction when moving about in whatever is being done—talking, performing in recital, walking in crowded hallways, lecturing, etc.—the tension can be let go. We have learned

that we must try to get rid of the tension by forcing it away, which only reinforces it.

### STATIC ON THE RADIO

Most of us have minds that tend to chatter continuously, and when we perform on stage, the mind may chatter *ad infinitum*. When we try to stop it, it actually strengthens and interferes with our performance. I compare it to static on the radio: the more static, the more interference. When we begin to notice the chatter in ourselves without trying to push it away, we create some space between it and our activity. The more space there is around it, the less it tends to take us over or interfere with our performance. Consequently, the clearer our minds become, and the easier it is to perform.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*Can Alexander Technique fix the problem?*

Whenever we want to fix anything we tend to concentrate, which is a form of end-gaining. We look for a solution that has no problem. It is not a problem to move with excess tension, it is just something that happens when you are not aware. There is no right or wrong here, only being aware or not being aware.

*If we should not concentrate, then what do we do?*

We need to think about how we are moving and, at the same time, think about the notes. When someone concentrates, it is narrowing in on

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## Performing With Ease *Continued . . .*

something at the exclusion of everything else. Rather, we need to see the whole of what is happening, inside and outside the body. By observing, being a witness to what is happening without the mind commenting, there is no interference from thoughts. When you are observing, you can notice your habits and tensions clearly, and in that noticing, tension will drop away. Since you do not need to do anything about it, you are free to focus on the music. I have found that slow practice is best. Move as slowly as you need to in order to notice your whole body and read the music at the same time. Sometimes I just take one measure, play the measure very slowly, rest for a measure observing my body (including my breath), and then repeat.

### *Can you do this without a teacher?*

It is a good idea to take regular lessons from a teacher of the Alexander Technique. However, if that is not possible, you can understand a lot about yourself by being open and willing to explore. It seems overwhelming to do because we are so conditioned to think a certain way. It really is simple once you observe what is happening without placing all the judgments that usually come with it. Practicing in this new way develops a new habit—one of noticing the quality of your movement, and process becomes everything.

## CONCLUSION

Can anybody really change? Can you make a change that happens where you seldom, if ever, go back?

Some people do not believe this is possible, some do believe this possible, and some people *know* this is possible. The people who know this is possible, know it because it is first-hand information: they have changed, and although old habits might creep back in every once in a while, it doesn't last very long and it is not as dramatic as it was before. Life becomes easier.

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This article was previously published in the March 2010 Percussive Notes periodical.



Rob Falvo is a professor of percussion at Appalachian State University, where he heads the percussion department. In 2007, he graduated from the Chesapeake Bay Alexander Studies – North Carolina Teacher Training Program and became a certified teaching member of Alexander Technique International. Falvo is a member of the Philidor Percussion Group and has performed with many orchestras and chamber groups based in North Carolina and New York. He earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from Manhattan School of Music.

## Remembering a Member and Mentor



Maren (Meyer Larson) Falck  
July 31, 1945 – May 15, 2011

Maren (Meyer Larson) Falck died peacefully early Sunday morning in her home, May 15, 2011. Born on July 31, 1945 in Salinas, Kansas, Maren grew up as the oldest of four children in a military family, and graduated from the University of Illinois in 1969.

A lifelong dancer, Maren attended Jacob's Pillow in Lenox, MA and danced professionally in New York City before moving to Columbus, Ohio, where she raised her family. She became certified at the Laban Institute in NYC in Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff Fundamentals, and was a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique. Recently she completed her yoga teacher certification.

Maren moved to Marblehead, MA, 16 years ago when she married her husband Erling. She was very active in the Marblehead community and served on the board of the Old Marblehead Improvement Association. With her husband, she enjoyed sailing out of the Eastern Yacht Club and driving their vintage autos with the Typ356ne Porsche Club.

Survivors include her husband Erling; her daughter Eliza Larson; her step-daughter Jami and her husband Jonathan Barry and their three children Olivia, Miles, and Charlotte, of Marblehead, MA; her sister Betty and her husband Mike Russian; her brother John and his wife Helen Meyer; her brother George Meyer, and several nieces and nephews all of Bellevue, WA.

Following Maren's wishes, no funeral services will be held. Instead, a celebration of Maren's life is being planned by her family to be held later this summer. In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made in her honor to the Peabody Essex Museum, E. India Square, 116 Essex St, Salem, MA 01970 Attn: Susan D. Lawrence.

## Teacher-Trainee Contribution

### Why is Finding Ease So Difficult?

by Joseph Arnold

Why is finding ease so difficult? As a student of the Alexander Technique, this is a question I have often pondered. At the time of this writing, I have been acquainted with the Alexander Technique for six years, and am currently in my third year of training to become a teacher of the technique. One thing that is abundantly clear to me now is that this work takes a long time to sink in. Finding ease with the hands-on guidance of my teachers is relatively easy, feels wonderful, and seems like the simplest thing in the world. Finding ease on my own, however, can be extremely difficult. When it's happening, easy movement, effortless support of body weight, and grace, all seem so... well, easy. One could say that one of the main purposes of things like the Alexander Technique, T'ai Chi, or Qi Gong, is to find ease within ourselves. Why then, do so many of us find it so difficult to be easy?

### What Is Freedom?

One way of quickly describing the Alexander Technique is that it is a way of finding freedom and ease of movement. What kind of freedom is this? Why should we want to be free in the first place? If we are not free, then what is keeping us back? In other words, freedom in relation to what?

In this day and age, I often hear much made about freedom – about how important it is to us, and how we deserve every freedom there is to be had. So I ask myself, what happens at the extremes of total freedom and no freedom? To illustrate a kind of total freedom, here is the parable of the Unfortunate Astronaut:

The Unfortunate Astronaut, half-crazed from months cooped up on the International Space Station, has at long last been sent out on a space walk. "Finally!" says the Unfortunate Astronaut, "I'll be free of the confines of this tiny station!" So the Unfortunate Astronaut suits up and is let out the airlock. The Unfortunate Astronaut is delighted to be outside and to move more freely. After a while, the Unfortunate Astronaut wants to move further afield and feels that the vital tether linking the spacesuit to the spaceship is a nuisance. So, the Unfortunate Astronaut gets out a knife and cuts the tether. "Finally!" says the Unfortunate Astronaut, "True and perfect freedom!"

Without that tether to the spaceship, the Unfortunate Astronaut feels free to move in whatever way possible. However, Unfortunate Astronaut is also certain to die, lost in the vastness of space. The Unfortunate Astronaut can move his/her limbs around in any way now, but cannot move towards the

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## Why is Finding Ease So Difficult?

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space station and safety. The very thing holding the Unfortunate Astronaut back was the same thing that kept the Unfortunate Astronaut safe and allowed him/her to move towards the space station. You see, we *can* have too much freedom, because extreme freedom leads to extreme vulnerability.

On the other hand, we can easily find many examples of the need for more freedom. We want to have freedom of religion, freedom from oppression, freedom of speech... I remember a story about a Russian author who was sent to prison for the things he wrote. There, chained to a wall and half-dead, he felt totally free because no matter how much the prison guards beat him, his mind would always be his own; free to wander beyond the prison walls. In the prison, he was perhaps as sure to die as the Unfortunate Astronaut, but the fact that his mind remained free pertains more directly to the question at hand. What if you had every freedom in the world – you could say what you wanted, go where you wanted, believe what you wanted – but your mind wasn't free? Would you be in a better or worse place than that Russian author?

## The Force of Habit and Faulty Sensory Perception

Through my experience with the Alexander Technique, I can safely say that a great many of us don't have free minds and bodies. Moreover, most of us

aren't even aware of this. The reason I know this is that I have seen the force of habit at work in myself and many others. The ability to quickly habituate to situations, states of mind, and movements is one of the fundamental things that makes us human. Indeed, this is a great tool, without which we would not be able to quickly learn how to use tools, pick up certain customs, or otherwise adapt to an ever-changing world. Indeed, we are creatures of habit. From the way we deal with others, to the way we walk, to the image we have ourselves in our minds, to the way we hold ourselves, our habits affect everything we do. Each of us from childhood has cobbled together our own set of habits that represent not necessarily a particular action or particular emotional response, but rather a place from which certain sets of actions and emotional responses can occur.

Like anything else, however, habits have their downsides. For one thing, once we create a habit, it can be very difficult to break. This is because habits tend to fade into the background of our awareness, like the tension many of us have in our neck and back, how we talk to ourselves within our own minds, or the tension that might be in our shoulders each time we use a computer. Once they have faded, we don't even recognize their existence. They just keep on working seemingly all by themselves, and almost entirely outside our every-day awareness. This, then, is the force of habit: for many of us, we can't change our habits of mind and body – even if we want to – because we aren't even aware of them.

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## Why is Finding Ease so Difficult?

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Since so many of our habits are sub-conscious, this means that many of our decisions and actions during the day are subconscious, too. Most of us feel that we have free will, that we are free to choose what we want during the day. But since the majority of our decisions and actions are probably subconscious, is this really free will? Are we as free as we think we are? Probably not.

At their worst, some habits cause us a great deal of pain. Take for example the musician who develops tendonitis because she habitually tenses her arms, shoulders, and neck while she plays. Another example is the person who continually seeks and creates drama in his life because that's what he's always been used to and can't see another way of dealing with people. Really strong, subconscious habits carry great momentum in our lives, and through them we can end up hurting ourselves immensely.

So, even if we might have the freedom to say what we wanted, go where we wanted, and believe what we wanted, our habits will curtail our freedoms in a very subtle and devious manner, just as concrete as any "Big Brother"-style government or jail cell.

### *Faulty Sensory Perception*

Our awareness works in such a way that any new stimulus gets priority over any old stimulus. For example, we might ignore the hum of an air

conditioning unit until it suddenly turns off and our awareness of it is enlivened again. The same thing holds true for our awareness of our body. When we've been clenching our jaw habitually for 20 years, we no longer realize that we're doing it – it just feels right. More than that, if we were to spontaneously release our jaw, or have the help of an Alexander teacher to do so, it might feel strange, or even uncomfortable. This phenomenon may be the primary reason we seem to cling to our habits so forcefully. After all, we quite naturally feel an urge to be right – but what if your idea of right is actually wrong? For many of us, this is indeed the case. What feels right is to tense ourselves up, to hold our head just so, to squint when looking, to strain to hear, to gasp when breathing, and in many other ways use more effort than is actually needed. And when we are told that we are using too much effort, we don't believe it because what we're doing feels like the only way to do it.

Our habits represent our safe place, our comfortable groove, and what feels right. However, they also represent one of the major obstacles to freedom and ease.

### Our Minds and Bodies Are One

As stated previously, our habits represent a place from which certain sets of reactions can take place. Let's take a look at what kinds of reactions those might be, and how they're related.

One thing in particular I'd like to look at is "muscle armoring." Muscle armoring occurs when we tighten our

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## Why is Finding Ease so Difficult?

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muscles in resistance to the present moment. Some of us in uncomfortable social situations, frightening or painful events, or during a physical injury, try to block out the undesirable aspects of whatever is going on by creating muscle tension. I don't know all the reasons for this, but I think muscle armoring gives us a false sense of security, and probably dulls the sensation of pain and fear somewhat. Over time, this muscle armoring can be habituated to the point where it becomes the primary reaction to anything we might come across. At this point, our reactions and experiences become stilted, stale, deadened, and can sometimes lead to even more pain.

The important thing about this, however, is that it isn't simply a bodily reaction. Muscle armoring takes place within a spectrum of reactions involving a whole person. Do we react to fear solely in our body, or solely in our mind? Do we not gasp or cry out when we feel pain, even if its origin was simply an idea? After all, when someone blocks others out emotionally, we even call that emotional armor. In my personal experience, and in what I can see in others, any reaction we have takes place in the context of the whole person. So when we resist the present moment, we do so with body and mind together.

At the opposite pole of the spectrum of possible reactions is one of openness to the present, and of acceptance of whatever comes. This involves letting go of our muscular and emotional armoring and letting go of our habitual reactions so that we can see things as they are,

and not as we usually react to them. When this happens, we might feel a sense of relief, of calm, emotional release, or ease of movement. Accepting the present, moving freely, and being open to whatever is in your life right now sounds nice, and it is indeed what many of us are looking for. This is, in fact, very difficult to achieve and in the next section, we will look at why this is.

## Freedom, Vulnerability, and "Response-Ability"

Why should we want to be totally open to the present moment? After all, there are many painful things in life, and it's easy to get hurt when we open ourselves up. On the other hand, we can also experience wonderful bliss and freedom when we do just that. Being totally open to the present moment is hard, but it is also the means by which we can achieve freedom and the ongoing development of mind, body, and spirit. One thing I've noticed is that in order to open up to the present, I have to allow myself to feel vulnerable. My own defenses, protections, and muscular/emotional armoring have to be let go in order to experience freedom and ease.

This world is chaotic and sometimes dangerous. Many of us deal in two major ways: one is by trying to seize control of a situation (for example, muscle armoring), or by letting just anything happen (for example, extreme passivity), and there are as many variations within this as there are people on this planet. Both these

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## Why is Finding Ease So Difficult?

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ways of dealing have their advantages and disadvantages. When we try to seize control, we give ourselves a sense of security, but lose our openness to new possibilities and experiences. When we let just anything happen, we can “go with the flow,” but are also likely to get lost in it. In my view, we have to find a third way of dealing with the world.

In order to be free in ourselves and in the world, we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable and open to unknown and potentially dangerous situations, whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. To do so, we must abandon our habitual ways of dealing in the world, and allow ourselves to feel what we feel. By the same token, we must also stick to principle, have discipline, and control ourselves – otherwise we might get mired, slumpy, or lazy.

Being free means taking responsibility for our reactions. And for me, the Alexander Technique is about our ability to respond intelligently and appropriately to any given situation.

In other words, our responsibility is to our “response-ability” so that we do not seize up or remain too passive in response to any particular thing.

Being free takes skillfully navigating ourselves through the continually changing present moment. We have to properly direct our energy without giving into our habits, or getting lost in the flow. This is why it’s so hard to find freedom and ease of movement: it takes skill, and skills must be honed.

Most of us aren’t even aware that navigating the present is a skill in the first place. After all, there is no object of skill other than our own minds and bodies, and often we are too close to ourselves to see ourselves clearly.

So why is finding ease so difficult? The force of habit, our oft inability to see ourselves clearly, and the potential dangers in the world we would protect ourselves from represent some major hurdles in life. To keep from becoming either stilted, stuck, or lost in the flow, we must hone the skill of intelligent response-ability, so that we can be free and easy in any situation, while at the same time keeping ourselves safe and free from harm.



Joseph Arnold is a violinist, music teacher, massage therapist, and an Alexander Technique teacher trainee. He came to the work because of repetitive strain injuries sustained while studying music at Carnegie Mellon University, and is now currently enrolled in Martha Hansen Fertman’s Philadelphia School for the Alexander Technique in Philadelphia, PA. If you have questions or comments about this article, please feel free to email the author at [jarnold84@gmail.com](mailto:jarnold84@gmail.com). Please click the link below to find examples of the author’s music:

<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/arnoldjoseph>.



Michael Frederick and  
Elisabeth Walker at the  
Sweet Briar  
Residential Workshop, 2009

It was a real privilege to observe these two veteran teachers working with each other who were both so open to new discoveries.

Founding director of the first three International Congresses on the Alexander Technique, Michael has organized and taught over 150 Alexander Technique workshops in the U.S. and Europe since 1978.

Elisabeth is the only living person in the world to have trained with F.M. Alexander. Her memoir *Forward and Away* was published in 2008. In her nineties, Elisabeth continues to teach Alexander Technique and travel the world.

~ MaryJean Allen, Co-Editor

Photo: Rick Pickwick

**NOTE:** for information about this and other workshops, please click this link:

<http://www.ati-net.com/atiwshop.php#workshops>



## We Want Your Submissions!

Submissions for the fall issue due  
on or before September 1, 2011

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*.

Note: if you email a submission, please also email a brief biography, and a color photo of yourself. Thank you!

Please email your submission, brief bio, and photo to:

Kathy Privatt

kathy.privatt@lawrence.edu

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"The Alexander Technique opens a window onto the little known area between stimulus and response and gives you the self-knowledge you need in order to change the pattern of your response – or, if you choose, not to make it at all."

Michael Gelb

*Body Learning*

## Please Submit the Following:

### Articles

We accept articles of varying length and 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  
on or before September 1, 2011

## Biotensegrity and The Alexander Technique: Toward Resilient Plasticity

By Carol Boggs

Ideas from anatomy and physics inform our AT teaching. The models we have in mind matter – a shift from machine mechanics to bio-life-affirming, resilient, architecturally inspired models can enrich our work.

Up until recently, it has not been uncommon for many disciplines to think of the human body as a collection of segments or blocks arranged one atop the other with the task being: to get the alignment just so, and keep it there. This arrangement is known as an axial loaded compression structure, i.e. gravity dependent, vertically oriented to gravitational up/down, with the bottom segments bearing the accumulative weight of every thing stacked above them. This model works fine for brick walls, columns, and many buildings, but is not a suitable model for the support and movement of the human body.

It has taken a few decades for a different pattern of organization to infiltrate the thinking as regards animate beings. It stems from the original work of Buckminster Fuller in the 1940's with his ideas about the kinds of structures that equally distribute the weight-bearing load thereby reducing the density of the materials required. He coined the term "tensegrity", a contraction of tensional integrity. By 1948, Kenneth Snelson, a young sculpture student having attended Fuller's classes at Black Mountain College, constructed the first

tensegrity structure. Snelson subsequently went on to construct numerous outdoor structures of large proportion all based on the principle of tensegrity, i.e. continuous tension and discontinuous compression. In a true tensegrity structure the support is supplied by a tensile network that suspends struts or spacers which do not touch.

From architecture and sculpture, tensegrity principles became relevant to biology. Since 1978, Donald Ingber, MD, PhD has done considerable research on a micro level looking at tensegrity as revealed in cellular structures, namely cytoskeletons.

"Over the past two decades, however, I have discovered and explored an intriguing and seemingly fundamental aspect of self-assembly. An astoundingly wide variety of natural systems, including carbon atoms, water molecules, proteins, viruses, cells, tissues and even humans and other living creatures, are constructed using a common form of architecture known as tensegrity. The term refers to a system that stabilizes itself mechanically because of the way in which tensional and compressive forces are distributed and balanced within the structure." Ingber 1998 p.2

In 1975, Ron Kirkby PhD wrote an article "The Probable Reality Behind Structural Integration". This is one of the first applications of the tensegrity

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## Biotensegrity and The Alexander Technique: Toward Resilient Plasticity

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principles to be applied to understanding the macro structure and support of the human body. It was this article that stimulated my thinking about support. As a result, over the years I have suggested to my AT students that the body is much more like a pup-tent than a brick wall. Being upright is not about stacking units one on top of another using axial-loaded compression to create support. Rather, support comes from the dynamic balancing of the tensile forces (muscles) in relation to the struts (bones) of the body. In my tent analogy the structure is tethered to the ground, creating a mix of gravity dependence with the play of tensile forces against the struts.

What I did not have quite in place until recently was the understanding that the human body is a complete tensegrity structure that is not dependent on gravity for creating support. Not to say that gravity is irrelevant, but rather that it is a force acting upon the tensegrous structure resulting, under the best of conditions, in an efficient and resilient interaction. The interplay of the tensile forces of the musculature acting with the spacers or struts of the bones creates a dynamic balancing act; in short we are complete, free standing, biotensegrity systems. Of course the fine tuning of this system is where AT practices can make the best use of an already well designed, dynamic system.

By 1982, Dr. Stephen Levin, orthopedist and the pioneer of Biotensegrity, published "Continuous Tension, Discontinuous Compression: A Model for Biomechanical Support of the Body".

"It is the author's contention that only in failure does the spinal column function as a "stack of blocks." The support system of the spine, and indeed the remainder of the body as well, is a function of continuous tension, discontinuous compression, so that the skeleton, rather than being a frame of support to which the muscles and ligaments and tendons attach, has to be considered as compression components suspended within a continuous tension network."

Levin p.1

"The understanding of tensegrity structures has many distinct advantages when applied to biological systems. These structures are omni-directional and are stable in any direction and independent of gravity. When applied to animated beings the structural system is maintained whether functioning as a biped or quadruped; prone, supine or standing upside down; on the ground, under water or in a spaceship. The laws of leverage act differently when applied within the tensegrity system so that forces generated are dissipated and may actually strengthen the structure much as prestressed concrete or a wire under tension. External forces applied to the system are dissipated throughout it so that the "weak link" is protected.

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## Biotensegrity and The Alexander Technique: Toward Resilient Plasticity

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The forces generated at heel strike as a 200 pound linebacker runs down the field, for example, could not be absorbed solely by the *os calcis* but have to be distributed – shock absorber-like – throughout the body.” Levin p.1, 2

“Although some of the rigid components of a tensegrity system may “kiss,” it does not mean that they are in compressive opposition to one another. Axial loads were applied to joints in live subjects under anesthesia during surgical intervention of a variety of conditions. Joint studies included the knee, ankle, elbow and metatarsal-phalangeal joints. In our studies at no time could the articular surfaces of these joints be forced into contact with one another as long as the ligaments remained intact. Although the study may lack elements of sophistication, it is readily reproducible by any surgeon.” Levin p. 3

The idea of your bones in suspension brings about a spacious, fluid possibility and can immediately introduce lightness due to an inhibitory undoing, as well as triggering an improved tensile support response. This couples nicely with our classic AT processes of inhibition and direction.

When put into practice the Alexander Technique tends toward undoing, accompanied by “stop doing the wrong thing and the right thing does itself”.

This may well work a good bit of the time. However, if the pattern of interference is more about collapse than excess tension, how do you stop doing the wrong thing? Clearly this is not a matter of releasing unnecessary work, but quite the contrary; it is a need for activation. The question is how? AT direction is the antidote; spatial thinking channeled through specific regions, e.g. “allow the back to lengthen and widen” is more useful than an inhibitory request to prevent or undo. But too often this results in over doing by trying to e.g., “make the back lengthen”. Even when this is done with the most delicate of intentions it still can seem like hard work.

A pivotal moment for me occurred when I was watching the streaming video conversation:

[www.biotensegrity.com](http://www.biotensegrity.com)

between Dr. Stephen Levin and Tom Flemons, sculptor and model maker of anatomical tensegrity structures, when Dr. Levin remarked, “all the bones in your body are sesamoid bones.” (A sesamoid bone does not directly articulate with any other bone, it is suspended in soft tissue and functions as a spacer, e.g. patella or knee cap).

The moment I heard the comment, I had a systemic shift involving release and engagement simultaneously, leaving me with the sensation of suspended bones. I have always known that it matters what one thinks and that the images that one considers are important, but this was a remarkably powerful suggestion that triggered a full tensegrous balance.

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## Biotensegrity and The Alexander Technique: Toward Resilient Plasticity

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Lastly, James Oschman, PhD, researcher and writer, supports the notion that improved use supports health and well being.

"Tensegrity accounts for the ability of the body to absorb impacts without being damaged. Mechanical energy flows away from a site of impact through the tensegrous living matrix. The more flexible and balanced the network (the better the tensional integrity), the more readily it absorbs shocks and converts them to information rather than damage." Oschman p. 64

"Muscular balance is the outward and visible sign that vital communications and energy flows are functioning freely. By communications, we are referring to the flow of body fluids, the flow of neural impulses and the flow of vibrations through the semi-conducting tensegrous living matrix. These are the vibrations that convey information needed for the support system to adapt itself to the way it is being used, and to repair injuries. In a balanced [balancing] and communicating body, various kinds of vibratory information percolate through out the body and into every cell and nucleus." Oschman p. 166

We know that what we think affects our subtle coordination patterns. The matrix of images that permeate how we think about support in the body makes a difference. Even if your teaching doesn't include sharing these ideas with your students, what stands behind your thoughts about support may benefit from considering the biotensegrity model.

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## Biotensegrity and The Alexander Technique: Toward Resilient Plasticity

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Carol Boggs is an Alexander Technique Teacher M.AmSAT, Laban Movement Analyst, and Massage Therapist with B.S. and M.A. degrees in Dance. She has a private practice in greater Washington DC., has offered AT classes for both the Vocal Studies and Dance Departments at George Mason University, and has joined faculties teaching for AT residential courses in the USA, Japan and the Caribbean. In 2003 and 2005 respectively, she completed the AT postgraduate courses, "The Art of Breathing" with Jessica Wolf and "The Carrington Way of Working" with John Nicholls. She has also studied "The Art of Swimming" developed by AT teacher, Steven Shaw. Carol has a strong movement and dance background including Continuum, Tai Chi and Aikido, and a keen interest in applying tensegrity principles to AT. She will be presenting "Biotensegrity and the Alexander Technique: Toward Resilient Plasticity" at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the F.M. Alexander Technique in Lugano Switzerland, August 2011. She has been teaching the Alexander Technique since 1980.

### A note from MaryJean Allen *ExChange* Co-editor

In July, 2010, at the Sweet Briar Residential Alexander Technique Workshop, Carol Boggs presented a fascinating session based on this article. After her session, Carol passed around straws and rubber bands, and we all made tensegrity models.

At the Friday evening concert, Carol's Alexander Technique Student, Steve Little, who was also a participant in the Sweet Briar workshop, performed a brand new composition, inspired by Carol's session.

On the next page are the lyrics to Steve's wonderful and fun song, as well as a link to the audio recording of his song.

I know that you will enjoy Steve's song as much as we all did at the concert.

## Tensegrity

by Steve Little *Copyright 2011*

Tensegrity got a hold on me.  
At the tip of my spine is a flower divine  
Revelation monumental putting petal to the mental  
Tensegrity.

Elasticity I'm free to be  
Any choice that I like, I can bypass my psyche!  
I can hear the angel's choir Lord I just discovered fire  
Electricity!

She had her hand on my spine with a touch oh so fine  
Said inhibition is good, I did less than I could.  
Gravity's my friend, not the usual puller.  
I was smokin' a left-handed cigarette with Buckminster Fuller.

Tensegrity It's the I that is we  
We're all in the same boat on this current we float  
No we just don't need to fight it, with intention we can right it.  
Tensegrity.  
Just set me free now's the time to be guess it's up to me  
Tensegrity!

-----  
Please click the link below to hear Steve perform his song:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I8Vfk2MHTZ4>



Steve Little works as an auctioneer, musician, and actor and lives in Maryland. He discovered the Alexander Technique by chance, or perhaps it was grace. "I'll never forget the feeling I had after my very first lesson," he says. "The spring and vitality in my step felt as if I had been transported back in time to a much younger age. It has led to some big improvements in my health and my life." He wrote the song "Tensegrity" during an incredibly enlightening Sweet Briar Residential Workshop in 2010. "Tensegrity" is dedicated to his Alexander Technique teacher, Carol Boggs.



## 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>

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<i>Ad Hoc</i> Technology Satellite	David Mills, Chair

Rainbow photo on Page 3 from [www.softwarebee.com](http://www.softwarebee.com)