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Dear Doctor

The Alexander Technique can be described as a psycho-somatic re-educative technique that does not set out to be curative but it may, in fact, have useful effects on musculoskeletal and psychological states.

Alexander's observations pointed out that the brain is designed to control the musculoskeletal system at a subconscious level, allowing the person to direct her/his attention to a variety of other stimuli. The problem for the upright human is that a variety of muscle strategies may become employed, in regard to being upright and in carrying out movements, that are inappropriate; for instance, overcontracted muscles around neck, shoulders, buttocks, thighs etc and undercontracted postural muscles such as in the lumbar region.

Such problems lay the basis for a range of chronic musculoskeletal dysfunctions - tension headaches, neck problems, breathing problems, low back problems, over-use/repetitive strain problems etc.

Alexander made insightful observations on how a person's attention can be directed to the state of her/his muscles (developing the proprioceptive sense, the 6th sense), learning how to begin to stop inappropriate muscle strategies (termed 'inhibition' by Alexander) and how to lay the basis for easier, reflex responses to gravity that result in effective strategies for being upright and for undertaking movements. For this process of allowing better strategies to develop in the person, Alexander developed a set of 'directions' related to the neck being free or relaxed, the head in a direction of 'forward and up' and the back 'lengthening and widening'.

This learning process, greatly assisted with the skilled hands of a teacher of the Technique, is of value to any individual as well as benefiting those with a range of musculoskeletal and stress-induced conditions.

It is interesting that the Technique has attracted the interest and support of a wide range of eminent people including John Dewey, America's leading educational and scientific philosopher; Sir Charles Sherrington, Nobel Laureate in Physiology/Medicine in 1932; Niko Tinbergen, Nobel Laureate in Physiology/Medicine in 1973.

I have undertaken research into some aspects of the Technique and have referred to these in my booklet 'The Lost Sixth Sense; a medical scientist looks at the Alexander Technique'.

Yours sincerely

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