

## Observation: “Observe more, do less, enjoy most”

By Sydney Laurel Harris

In a recent newsletter Liz Memel, Certified RIE® Associate, in her article *Getting In Touch* wrote:

“Thank you for teaching us to let our child teach us,” wrote a perceptive couple who had been in a RIE group with me for the first two years of their parenting lives. By following RIE Principle #7, ‘sensitive observation of the child in order to understand the child’s needs,’ we have a learning mode, the child becoming the teacher. There is a continuous information loop returning to us every present time, every moment of now, when we don’t lose touch, sight or sound with the other.”

Something similar happens in the Alexander Technique. It begins in the teacher/student relationship, and then continues with the application of the Alexander Technique by the student on his/her own.

The Alexander Technique teacher first observes the student to gather information. In this case the teacher is learning about the psycho-physical interference with the student’s well-being and coordination. While some psycho-physical interference manifests as habitual patterns, there is a continual shifting, moment by moment. In order to sense these changes, the teacher needs to be present and without a pre-conceived agenda. The teacher is becoming the student in order to be the teacher.

With the information received, the AT teacher then proceeds to guide the student to release the interference. All the while the AT teacher continues to observe what is happening moment by moment and guides the student to learn to observe themselves.

The AT teacher, like the RIE parent, observes by watching and listening to the student. Listening includes the sounds of words, of the breath and even of the feet meeting the ground. And equally important to listening and watching to gather information, is the unique way the AT teacher uses touch.

Learning the Alexander Technique includes learning observation skills unencumbered by faulty sensory perception and preconceived notions. We cannot consciously make changes if we are not even aware of what it is that we wish to change. It is through observation that we become aware.

As Memel quotes our RIE mentor, Magda Gerber, “observe more, do less, enjoy most”.

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**Observation** is an activity of a living being in order to receive [knowledge](#) of the environment or of themselves through the [senses](#). In science, observation can also involve the recording of data via the use of instruments. The term may also refer to any [data](#) collected during this activity.

From Wikipedia

*“We discovered that the (Alexander Technique) is based on exceptionally sophisticated observation, not only by means of vision but also to a surprising extent by using the sense of touch.”*

Nikolaas Tinbergen, From “Ethology and Stress Diseases”, Nobel Prize Acceptance speech, December 1973

*“In The Use of the Self we find not only **a very special type of self observation** but also the willingness to question our preconceptions and to realize that what seemed right yesterday, might not be right today.”*

Dr. Wilfred Barlow in introduction to The Use of the Self 1985 edition