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Giving a Workshop:

Using Alexander Principles in Everyday Life

Have you ever wanted so badly for people to learn, that you gave them more than they could possibly take in?

I gave an introductory Alexander Technique workshop for sixteen people at the end of January, 2010. The participants ranged in age from thirteen years to over seventy years. Some had taken many Alexander lessons, but for most this was to be their first experience. And of course, I wanted this first impression of the Alexander Technique to be positive and valuable. Having read through the feedback sheets turned in at the end of the workshop, it would appear that the participants had a positive experience and found it to be valuable. However, when it was over I felt subdued and not as excited as I had been at the start. Was it the let-down after so much preparation and the high of performance or was it something else?

The Alexander Technique is a psycho-physical process which means that it requires thinking and moving, thinking and moving in a new way. And because it is not something that we are already accustomed to it is difficult to understand without direct experience. While one can learn the Technique on their own if they do what F. M. Alexander did, go through a pain-staking process of observing himself in three-way mirrors and experimenting with his own use over many years, it is much easier with the guidance of the teacher's hands as well as words. For this reason, it was necessary for me as an Alexander teacher teaching a workshop to provide demonstrations, group activities, speak about the Technique, and work with each participant individually.

I planned for and provided just such a blend. So what happened that led to me feeling discontented when it was over? I think that I tried to do too much and at the same time I didn't feel like I did enough. I wanted too much for the participants to learn, that I gave them more than they could possibly take in. Teaching most often gives more than the student can take in and that is why learning takes place over time. However, it is still important to pace the learning in such a way that no one becomes overwhelmed and shuts down. In the case of the workshop, the pace wasn't quite right for me. In the Alexander Technique this would fall under the concept of "end-gaining". End-gaining is where you are focused on the end instead of the means-whereby. I was focusing on wanting everyone to "get it" so much that I spent time on some activities more than I would have liked and ran out of time without getting to other activities.

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