

Jessica Wolf's The Art of Breathing: Post-training Journal Notes

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Having now completed the much talked about Art of Breathing training with Jessica Wolf, the breathing journey is just beginning. It really is an extension of the AT work: focusing on the movement of breath.

Initially, it was the new sense of dimensionality, i.e. not just length and width but also volume that was so striking. This included the discovery of what happens when we think about lengthening along the inside of our spines rather than the back of the spine. Somehow a more whole image of the spine arises and there is less temptation to manipulate the spine by pulling it into length, or pushing it (the back) back in space.

Another revelation: the incredible ease in doing Alexander's whispered "Ah". The whispered "Ah" is an *exercise* that F M Alexander developed to help people free up their voices. In *Constructive Conscious Control of the Self*, Alexander writes "...this should begin with whispered vocalization, preferably the vowel sound "Ah", as this form of vocal use, being so little employed in everyday life, is rarely associated with ordinary bad psycho-physical habits in vocalization. The process involved prevents sniffing and 'sucking in air', undue depression of the larynx and undue stiffening of the muscles of the throat, vocal organs, and neck. It also prevents the undue lifting of the front part of the chest during inspiration, its undue depression during expiration...".

Unfortunately, rarely were whispered "Ahs" a part of my teaching practice. This is because they were first taught to me, in my training several decades ago, in a rather mechanical, disconnected fashion that never felt organically connected to AT practice for me.

Today, after the wonderful training, it's exciting to explore the benefits of the whispered "Ah" within the context of AT training. Not only are improvements in the voice immediately apparent, but it offers yet another effective means to elicit awareness of our habit patterns that interfere with our "use", both in general and with regard to the movement of our breathing in particular.