

Sydney's Dia-blog: Blog with Two People



[Law Offices of Sandy Lipkin](#)

My guest is Sandy Lipkin, Attorney

Sandy Lipkin had private lessons in the AT for almost two years and it has been a year since she stopped lessons. I recently asked her how her life has changed as a result of studying the AT and how it continues to influence her life since she stopped.

Sandy:

How has the Alexander Technique changed my Life? That's a pretty big question and I would have to state that there overarching changes in every corner of my life and have involved a changing of the guard as to which voice inside my head gets to be in charge.

First, by way of context, I'd briefly like to explain what brought me to the Alexander Technique. I am a professional woman, a patent trademark attorney, with my own solo practice. Throughout my entire adult life, I have been interested in maintaining optimal health and fitness. I have moved from weight training to cycling to swimming to yoga to martial arts. All these activities gave me what felt to me like a really good understanding of my body; I felt really in tune with my body as a result of my interest and attention given to it. I have always looked after my diet and other habits, trying to choose the healthy thing at least 80% of the time. I take my health and fitness as my own personal responsibility and therefore am a seeker of activities and lifestyle choices that would enhance my freedom within my own body to be healthy and fit.

Sydney:

It is interesting to be reminded about your beliefs about your body. You, like many of us that are physically active and attentive to the body, had an understanding that was based on your sensations. You had misinterpreted many of those sensations and came to various inaccurate conclusions, "you aren't strong enough, limber enough, coordinated enough, etc.." The wonderful thing is that you were able to set those beliefs aside long enough to explore new ideas about your body with me.

Sandy:

In 2018 I embarked on a journey which has revolutionized my life. I decided, without logical explanation it seemed, at the age of 53 to start taking singing lessons. I always loved music and wanted to sing, but when I auditioned for the choir in church as a child, I got the message that this was not something I had an aptitude for. I got the message that the ability to sing was something you were either born with you weren't. Years later, probably 9 or 10 years ago I met a person who told me that anyone can be taught to sing. I was skeptical, but this person had apparent authority that I trusted; the thought remained with me for about 5 years until I decided to test that hypothesis, so I started taking singing lessons.

Sydney:

This is such an amazing quality of yours; you constantly challenge yourself to move into the unfamiliar and uncomfortable to do things that you want. I truly admire you for immersing yourself in singing and playing the guitar coming from such a disempowering background.

Sandy:

Singing involves the whole self, specifically, the body, I quickly found I could not change the subject in any way to mask the tension. The tension had taken up residence in my body and I could not will it away.

I resolved to look into it and at the end of 2019 took my first Alexander Technique lesson with you. Shortly after I began, the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent rules took over the world which relegated my lessons to Zoom.

Sydney:

Although I had been teaching the AT for more than 40 years at this point, I hadn't taught over Zoom before. Therefore, it seemed important to work with Zoom students twice per week at a minimum. To encourage this, a reduced rate was offered.

Sandy:

I was very fortunate that the situation benefitted me in this way. And I am nothing if not an avid student, so I was able to glean much from these Zoom sessions, sans the typical hands-on by the teacher that is usually involved.

Sydney:

You were an ideal student to work with, your commitment to learning, experimenting, testing, questioning made the experience equally rewarding for me as a teacher.

In your Zoom lessons the emphasis was on becoming aware of your habitual interfering patterns, learning how to inhibit these patterns, and redirecting your whole self in a range of activities. We began by working with how you sat at the computer since this was how you spent most of your waking hours. The activities evolved to encompass more areas of your life, bending to reach things, cleaning the cat litter boxes, walking and swimming, some yoga

positions, singing and playing the guitar to name just a few. We always started with where/how you were when you came into a lesson, your psycho physical state in the current moment. Sometimes you would wake in intense physical pain, and we would work just to calm the nervous system before attempting much else. There wasn't a step one, then step two lesson plan. We worked with the things that you loved to do along with the things that you found difficult.

Sandy:

After about 20 months, in July or August of 2021, it was mutually determined that I understood the principles well, so I stopped the sessions and went to fly on my own, at least that is how I saw it. I had to go out and repeatedly work through what I had learned in order to train my body away from its old habits.

Sydney:

The Alexander Technique can help solve such a vast array of problems, from chronic pain to poor posture to vocal strain. Some of these problems can be resolved with a minimum of 12 to 20 lessons. Understanding the principles of the AT well enough to be able to apply them on your own, often takes 2 years or longer. I am most gratified when my students understand the Technique well enough to apply them independently.

Sandy:

So, here I am, about a year after the lessons have stopped, to ruminate on all that I have learned and all of the awareness that continues to show itself to me as I spend quality time each day with my body.

My practice now with the Technique has turned into a daily morning walk for about an hour where I spend alone time with my body and my habits. I have found that I am in the most bodily distress when I wake up in the morning because of all of the unconsciousness that goes on during sleep. The first two or three hours of my day are so crucial to get to the body and give it attention and loving correction rather than having my old habits commandeer my body all day only to find myself too tired at the end of the day to try and give my body the attention it needs after I am done with my work and parenting responsibilities. In that sense, my body, and my relationship to it has taken the first priority in my day, which is part of the changing of the guard regarding the hierarchical voices inside of my psyche.

Sydney

While I am thrilled with the discipline that you use to continue practicing the principles of the work, I find that I still want to tweak your language a bit... the word "correction" stands out. The AT is not a process of correcting as much as it is a process of undoing the unnecessary tension while staying conscious in activity. "Correcting" lends itself to being judgmental in a way that usually creates more tension rather than less tension. Keep up the excellent work.

Sandy:

All of my endeavors: working, parenting, walking, swimming, weightlifting, yoga, singing, making music - all of it has been enhanced through this journey. I can get quite evangelical about it and start feeling that the entire world needs this. While that may be true, I also know from my own personal experience, that those who are seeking this type of integration and healing, have a good chance of being lucky enough to stumble upon this valuable Technique that has stood the test of so much time. The Technique will draw in those who are meant to find it. I can ultimately pat myself on the back for doing the seeking and following through with the humility and work required to ask myself, freshly each day, and with love, "what else am I wrong about?"

Sydney:

Sandy, thank you so much for participating in this dialog/bi-a-blog.

Sandy has many more profound observations about herself in this journey and I will include these in a subsequent newsletter.