Debunking Myths About Posture: Understanding How It Harms or Improves Health

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Overview of Session

**Part I: Delving into Posture**
- Varying Definitions of Posture
- Health Implications of Good and Poor Posture
- Models of Good Posture

**Part II: Introducing the Alexander Technique**
- FM Alexander
- My background with the Alexander Technique
- Body Education
- The Alexander Technique and Body Awareness

**Part III Can it Help Me?**
- Who Benefits?
- Tips
- Closing
Part I: Delving into Posture
What Do You Think of When You Imagine ‘Good Posture’?
What Do You Associate with Poor Posture?
This is Not ‘Standing Up Straight’
Instead of ‘Straight’ Think ‘Up’
What Happens to Our Spine When We Use Our Phone?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>15°</th>
<th>30°</th>
<th>45°</th>
<th>60°</th>
<th>90°</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Force To Cervical Spine:</td>
<td>10-12lbs.</td>
<td>27lbs.</td>
<td>40lbs.</td>
<td>49lbs.</td>
<td>60lbs.</td>
<td>Not Measurable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Misuse of Body = Pain in Activity
Results from the Repetition of Harmful Habits
Good Use of Body=Ease and Balance in Activity
We Can Learn From Other Cultures
Models of Good Use
Part II: Introducing the Alexander Technique

“You translate everything, whether physical or mental or spiritual, into muscular tension.”

F.M. Alexander
What is the Alexander Technique?

• A clinically proven tool used to alleviate back pain and discomfort as well as improve posture.

• Focuses on the skeletal, muscular, and nervous systems and is based on a fundamental principle that mental & physical health are inseparable

• Principles can be applied to any aspect of body use ranging from performance to rehabilitation to promoting better posture and health

• Non-intrusive and highly effective, leading to awareness of previously unknown habits which interfere with the body’s overall functioning in health

• Facilitated through the guidance of an Alexander Technique teacher demonstrating the body’s misuse

• Offers an individualized approach to develop lifelong skills for self-care that help people recognize and avoid poor habits
History of the Alexander Technique

• The technique was developed in the early 20th century, by an Australian man named Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955).

• He was a Shakespearean actor challenged by recurring voice problems

• After a performance Alexander lost his voice completely and sought the aid of doctors and voice teachers, but to no avail. He decided to discover for himself what was causing the problems he experienced in his voice

• He observed himself with the use of mirrors to find out what he was doing while speaking the text.

• He noticed that he was continually pulling his head back and down each time he came to speak. The result of this contraction set a chain of tensions and misalignment in various places such as the chest, back, and knees.

• These were the principles he used to develop the Alexander Technique

• Over a career span of more than fifty years, he refined his method of instruction. After teaching for over 35 years, he began to train teachers in what has now become known as the Alexander Technique
What F.M. Alexander Would Look Like if He Were Holding a Mobile Phone
My Background with the Alexander Technique

• Discovered the Alexander Technique while at drama school in London in 2001

• Trained and graduated from a three-year Alexander Technique training course at Shaike and Linda Hermelin’s school in Tel-Aviv, Israel in 2009

• My Research: “iPosture: A Closer Look at the Lifestyle Practices of School Children”.

• Currently teach the Alexander Technique in Melbourne, Florida.
# Results of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Analyzed</th>
<th>Low-Income Group</th>
<th>Upper-Middle Class Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Activity Time p/w</td>
<td>8.87 hours per week</td>
<td>5.93 hours per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked for +30 minutes p/d</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played outside with friends or family frequently</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast-Food intake</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homecooked meals</td>
<td>All participants</td>
<td>Most participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to technology</td>
<td>50% didn’t have one or more of three of the devices; 100% had a phone</td>
<td>All participants had access to all devices in their homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedentary Activities</td>
<td>38.93 hours in sedentary activities p/w of which 26.33 hours using electronic devices</td>
<td>39.44 hours in sedentary activities p/w of which 26.97 hours using electronic devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posture</td>
<td>33% excellent, 22% good, 22% average, 22% poor</td>
<td>0 excellent, 14% good, 42% average, 43% poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Body Education: Why Do We Only Think of Our Body When We’re in Pain?
When We are Babies We Are Taught to Revere Our Bodies
What Happens As We Get Older?
The Alexander Technique Introduces Body Awareness
The Alexander Technique Reduces Body Pain
The Alexander Technique Improves Posture
Table Work
Part III: Can It Help Me?
Who Benefits?
People Who Spend the Majority of Their Day Sitting Down
People Who Exercise With an Arched Back and Tight Neck
People Who Lift Weights with Excessive Tension
People Who Use Their Bodies in Ways That Cause Strain
Or Don’t Pay Attention to How They Use Their Bodies in Activity
People Who Aren’t That Physically Active
Teenagers
People Suffering from Aches and Pain
Anxiety and Depression
Work Related Musculoskeletal Disorders
Dentists
Surgeons
Physicians & Nurses
Nurse Aids and Care Takers
Office Workers
Drivers
Musicians & Singers
Actors
Athletes
Business Professionals
Tips for Promoting Good Posture
Observe Small Children
The Squat
Sit on Stools or Surfaces Without Back Support to Increase Strength in Torso
Think of Sitting ‘Up’ as Opposed to ‘Straight’
This is Especially True for Teenagers
Move Around Every 30 Minutes
Spend More Time in the Squat Position
Pay Attention to How You Squat Too!
Bring Food Up to Our Mouth When We Eat and Not the Head Down Towards the Food
Same With the Phone
Use a Pillow to Prop up Devices
Lie Down in Semi-Supine 20 Minutes a day
Final Thoughts
The Alexander Technique has been Integrated into Health Care in Other Countries

• The Alexander Technique is well-known in Europe and even integrated into health care systems in places like the United Kingdom and Israel.

• In the UK, National Health Service (NHS) trusts have started to offer Alexander Technique lessons as part of their outpatient pain clinics.

• In Israel, Clalit Mushlam, a branch of one of Israel's largest mandated health service organizations, offers substantial discounts for medical coverage of Alexander Technique lessons.
Additional Research on the Efficacy of the Alexander Technique


References


For More Information about the Alexander Technique and How to Find a Teacher Near You:

The Complete Guide to the Alexander Technique
www.alexandertechnique.com

The American Society for the Alexander Technique
www.amsatonline.org

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