



As Featured in *Healthy Times*

Adding Value - The Alexander Technique

By Christie Johnson

Internationally Certified Alexander Technique Teacher



F.M. Alexander said that we always have three choices. We can do what we have always done, we can do something in a new way or we can do nothing at all. Some say that if we do what we've always done, we'll be where we've always been. This is particularly true of addictive patterns e.g. over eating, alcohol/caffeine consumption and/or obsessive compulsive disorders.

We each have different life patterns. Some people are the early to bed and early to rise types. Others are night owls and can't imagine waking up with the birds. As we go through each day most of us have a certain amount of habitual routine and we follow it. Is this adding value?

F.M. Alexander also said, "We can throw away the habit of a lifetime in a few minutes..." In the Alexander Technique you become an artful observer of your patterns and thus open yourself to new choices and new potential value.

My grandfather tells the story of how he was a smoker for years and years. Then one day in 1969 he was reading the Reader's Digest article that stated that smoking causes cancer. At that moment he had a pack of cigarettes in his front shirt pocket. He immediately took them out of his pocket and dumped them in the trash can. He never smoked again. Just the awareness of cancer was enough for him to say, "No more!" Cigarettes were not adding value to his life and were likely taking value from him. Just by reading, as you are doing now, he threw away the habit of a lifetime in merely minutes.

Life patterns come in all shapes and sizes. Ten years ago I found myself in the pain loop cycle of sciatica. No matter what I did - exercise, no exercise, physical therapy, massage or other forms of intervention I seemed to always have pain.

Pain is not a cycle that most people would willingly sign-up for. However, once it kicks in and continues to grab your attention it can be hard to get off the pain cycle pattern. It took me two and a half years of constant pain before I stumbled into a solution that worked for me – The Alexander Technique.

After one lesson, I learned where I was holding muscle tension and how that was contributing to my pain cycle. My pain dissipated by 90%. Then, I took another lesson and learned about further patterns that were part of my everyday routine and learned that I had new movement choices. Since that period I have been pain free as I have expanded my awareness choices by listening and learning from the signals that my body gives me. I threw away habits of holding muscles that were not adding value.

During daily activities I now find myself asking questions. Is the way I am doing whatever activity adding value to my overall life quality? If not, what am I doing and how would I choose a different approach? For instance, as I sit in traffic, does it add value to tense my neck muscles or hold onto the steering wheel with a death grip? Am I really going to get there faster by holding onto tension in the process of moving from point A to B?

Another example -- many of us have a certain person (friend, relative, co-worker) who tests our limits or basically pushes our buttons. Again, does it add value to me to tense my muscles based on an issue that someone else is having? As soon as I notice my reaction (the bait), I find myself in a micro second thought process asking, "Is this going to add value to my quality of life?" Thus, I have acknowledged the bait and can choose how I would like to respond differently. Will that be with or without tension? Would I like a little added tension with that? How about a side order of tension? Does tension add value?

Remember, "We can throw away the habit of a lifetime in a few minutes..." As you go through your daily activities notice and explore the ways you respond. Are you adding value to your quality of life? Feel free to throw away habits that are not adding value. If you are struggling to recognize the patterns or to let go of them feel free to ask for help. To me there is nothing more freeing than letting go of patterns that are not serving us and finding out about new choices that add quality and more life value.

Christie Johnson helps people discover their unique patterns of thinking and moving in relation to all that they do. She helps executives and performers mitigate stage fright, seniors and surfers improve balance, gardeners and golfers improve range of motion, pregnant women and their partners expand their comfort, and riders and runners to release muscle tension. Free your Form, Function and Flow.

For workshops and lessons call 951-312-2188 or visit: www.FormFunctionFlow.com